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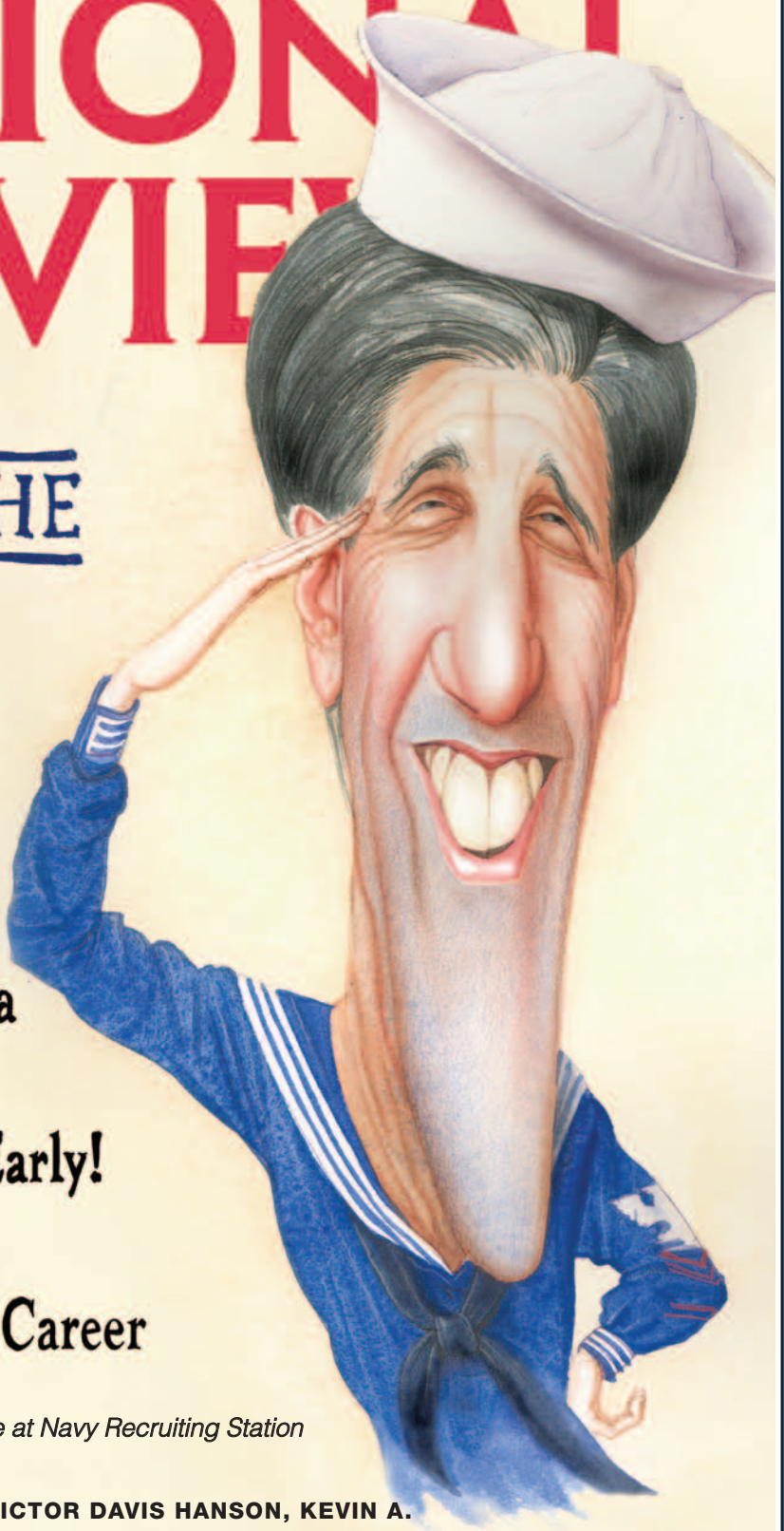

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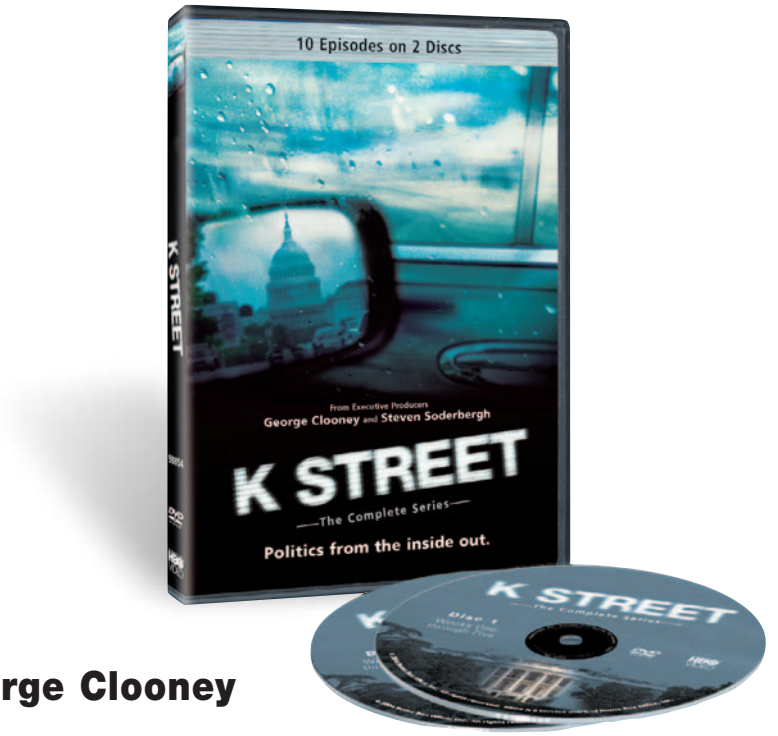

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SEPTEMBER 13, 2004 VOL. LVI, NO. 17

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■ NR REPUBLICAN CONVENTION SPECIAL

All-Kerry Issue

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COVER: *Roman Genn*

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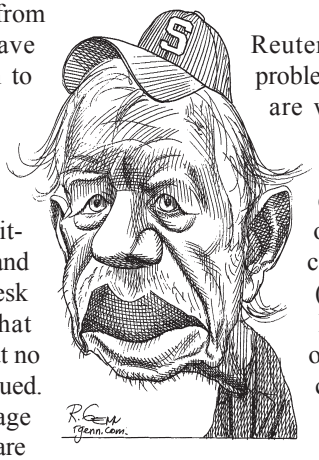
letters to the editor

TROUBLE IN REUTERVILLE

Tom Gross commits all the sins of journalism of which he accuses Reuters ("The Case of Reuters," July 26), with no proper evidence except comments from an unnamed and disgruntled former employee. That is hardly an impeccable source and its use breaches a cardinal rule of good journalism. Gross also failed to ask us for comment.

As he acknowledges, Reuters has a 150-year reputation that is synonymous with good, fair, and objective news-gathering. This reputation is maintained throughout the world, including in our coverage of the Middle East conflict.

All of our journalists are made fully aware that balance is essential in every story. They are also bound by a code of conduct that bars them from political activity. We have a no-tolerance approach to bias whether it concerns text, pictures, or television.



Reuters stories also go through a scrupulous editing process, both locally and on our central editing desk in London, to ensure that they are balanced and that no phrase could be misconstrued. Complaints about coverage from readers or viewers are taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and fairly.

Gross acknowledges in his article that Reuters stories do indeed contain the necessary context and background to explain this complex conflict, yet appears to hold Reuters responsible for the fact that our customers do not always publish those stories in full.

The most unpleasant aspect of Gross's article, however, is his vicious personal attack on Wafa Amr, again based on dubious references to evidence from "several" former Reuters staffers. Gross casts odious slurs on a respected correspondent, with little or no evidence except hearsay. Amr has worked commendably for Reuters for more than a decade—often braving violence and threats to report the news.

Finally, Gross incorrectly states that Amr and other Palestinians who work for Reuters are stringers. Some Palestinian journalists who work for us are indeed stringers, as are some Israelis. But Amr and very many of her Palestinian colleagues in Reuters are full staff members.

David Schlesinger
Reuters
London

TOM GROSS REPLIES: David Schlesinger obviously hasn't read my article very carefully. For example, I never say that Wafa Amr is a stringer. Quite the opposite: I state that she is a correspondent. I did not speak only to one "disgruntled former employee" but to a number of people familiar with Reuters. And so on. Reuters's problems in regard to the Mideast are well known among journalists in Jerusalem and beyond. This is why writers such as James Taranto of the *Wall Street Journal* call the agency Reuterville (since, when it comes to the Mideast, it lives in a world of its own), and why other commentators refer to it as al-Reuters, because they find it hard to distinguish its Mideast reporting from outlets such as al-Jazeera. It is regrettable that Reuters—if David Schlesinger is any indication—doesn't acknowledge that it has a problem.

THE PIT BULL OF PLAINS

Watching the Democratic convention, I was astonished at the diatribe coming from the mouth of Jimmy Carter, albeit delivered softly, with the benign expression of a wise old man. Hearing nothing to corroborate my response from friends, family, or neighbors, I discounted my reaction. What a relief to have it confirmed in Jay Nordlinger's "There He Goes Again—Again" (August 23).

Nancy Bowman
New Canaan, Conn.

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for the record

"Well, the joke's on me—you were right about reincarnation."

■ In *The Hotline*'s survey of state polls, President **Bush** leads in 24 states worth 205 electoral votes and **John Kerry** leads in 24 states worth 296 electoral votes (270 needed to win). . . . Fabrizio, McLaughlin poll of voters in 19 battleground states: Kerry earns 47 percent, Bush 45 percent, and **Nader** 2 percent. . . . Bush on Kerry's opposition to missile defense: "I think those who oppose this ballistic missile system don't understand the threats of the 21st century." . . . Secretary of state **Colin Powell**, in *The Atlantic*: "We are a superpower that cannot be touched in this generation by anyone in terms of military power, economic power, the strength of our political system, and our value system. What we would like to see is a greater understanding of the democratic system, the open-market economic system, the rights of men and women to achieve their destiny as God has directed them to do, if they are willing to work for it. And we really do not wish to go to war with people, but, by God, we will have the strongest military around, and that's not a bad thing to have. It encourages and champions our friends that are weak and chills the ambitions of the evil." . . . Gallup poll: 49 percent say war in Iraq was "worth it" and 48 percent say "not worth it."

■ **Bob Dole** on Kerry, on CNN: "One day he's saying that we were shooting civilians, cutting off their ears, cutting off their heads, throwing away his medals or his ribbons. The next day he's standing there [saying], 'I want to be president because I'm a Vietnam veteran.' . . . Maybe he should apologize to all the other 2.5 million veterans who served. He wasn't the only one in Vietnam." . . . Kerry: "I believe I can fight a more effective, more thoughtful, more strategic, more proactive, more sensitive war on terror." . . . Vice President **Cheney**: "A 'sensitive war' will not destroy the evil men who killed 3,000 Americans and who seek the chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons to kill hundreds of thousands more." . . . Kerry on Aug. 18: "I want to say something about the plan that the president announced on Monday to withdraw 70,000 troops from Asia and Europe. . . . It needs to be done at the right time and in a sensible way. This is not that time or that way." . . . Kerry on Aug. 1, on ABC News: "I will have significant, enormous reduction in the level of troops [in Iraq]. We will probably have a continued presence of some kind, certainly in the region. If the diplomacy that I believe can be put in place can work, I think we can significantly change the deployment of troops not just there but elsewhere in the world. In the Korean peninsula, perhaps. In Europe, perhaps. There are great possibilities open to us."

■ Kerry fundraiser **John P. Coale** on how he did his job, in *New York Times*: "We had a whole network of attorneys from the tobacco wars that I got money from." . . . **Jimmy Carter**: "The world has suffered the last four years." . . . **Randy Kelly**, Democratic mayor of St. Paul, Minn., endorses Bush: "Our nation is at a critical crossroads, and we need a strong, stable, and steady leader." . . . Ralph Nader fails to secure ballot spots in Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, and Virginia. . . . **Pete Coors** (R.) prevails in Colorado Senate primary. . . . Senate candidate **Alan Keyes** (R., Ill.) says descendants of slaves should be exempt from income taxes.

■ Sen. **Ted Kennedy** (D., Mass.) says his name appeared on government no-fly lists earlier this year. . . . Administration official tells *Washington Post* that suspected terrorist had been using alias of "T. Kennedy." . . . District of Columbia mayor **Anthony Williams** on new security measures: "This is a city built on freedom, not on order and efficiency, and we don't often weigh the balance accordingly. Now we're creating this fortress." . . . Despite promises of stronger presence, federal air marshals ride on less than 5 percent of all domestic flights, reports *Washington Times*. . . . For GOP convention, New York mayor **Michael Bloomberg** (R.) announces "Welcome Peaceful Political Activists" promotion, saying, "We want to make sure protesters feel welcome here and that they take advantage of all New York City has to offer." . . . In *Star-Ledger* poll, 61 percent of New Jersey Democrats say Gov. **Jim McGreevey** (D.) should complete his term following announcement that he's gay and accusations of corruption.

■ Citizens for a Sound Economy and Empower America merge as FreedomWorks, with **Dick Armey**, **C. Boyden Gray**, and **Jack Kemp** as co-chairmen and **Bill Bennett** as senior fellow. . . . Federal government offers $1 billion in special assistance for hospitals coping with unreimbursed costs of treating illegal aliens. . . . National Park Service proposes limiting number of snowmobiles in Yellowstone to 720 per day. . . . Cherokee Nation outlaws same-sex marriage.

■ Libya agrees to pay $35 million to victims of terrorist bombing of Berlin nightclub in 1986. . . . Iran tests new missile with range capable of striking any part of Israel. . . . In attempt to spur economic development and ease overcrowding, South Korea chooses unnamed rural site for relocation of national capital.

■ **Craig Kilborn**: "Our nation's governors are rising to the occasion to send supplies to Florida. There was a terrible hurricane down there. **Schwarzenegger** is sending water and **Pataki** is sending food. McGreevey is sending throw pillows." **NR**

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THE WEEK

■ How can we ever learn the truth about John Kerry's medals? He threw them away.

■ "Bush smeared John McCain four years ago," says the new Kerry television ad. "Now he's doing it to John Kerry." The Democratic presidential candidate is in high-outrage mode these days, striking back at the group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth and their book, *Unfit for Command*, which questions key aspects of Kerry's Vietnam record. Part of the Kerry counterattack is the claim that George W. Bush stood by and watched approvingly while a "fringe" veteran attacked former POW John McCain during the 2000 South Carolina primary campaign. No one has really examined this charge. Here's what actually happened. At a Bush rally in South Carolina on February 3, 2000, attended by several Congressional Medal of Honor winners, a man named J. Thomas Burch said of McCain, "He has always opposed all the legislation, be it Agent Orange or Gulf War health care, or frankly the POW/MIA issue. He was the leading opponent in the Senate. He had the power to help these veterans. He came home and he forgot us." Later, Bush said nothing to contradict Burch. But just how outrageous were Burch's words? He did, after all, focus his remarks on McCain's Senate voting record. And they were not without some basis. A week later, *Newsday* reported on McCain's "uneasy relationship with some veterans organizations, particularly Vietnam veterans groups." *Newsday* discussed McCain's 1999 vote against a Department of Veterans Affairs funding bill, which, right or wrong, angered some veterans. The paper mentioned that McCain's work in favor of normalizing relations with Vietnam in 1994 had also angered some veterans. And *Newsday* noted that while mainstream veterans organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars have honored McCain, they have often opposed his voting record. "In 1998, the VFW gave [McCain] a 75 percent favorable rating on their legislative issues, while several other senators scored 80-100," *Newsday* said, "and in other years, it has been lower, hitting 27 percent in 1995." Now, if Bush had stood by while Burch charged that John McCain had had it easy in Vietnam, or had not really been a prisoner of war—*that* would have been outrageous. But Bush didn't do that. He let someone slam McCain's voting record. The alleged "smear" never occurred.

■ In response to Democratic demands that he denounce the Swift Boat Veterans' ads, Bush says that he thinks all ads by such organizations should be illegal. Only the political parties and the candidates, which have to comply with detailed regulations, should be able to run campaign ads. Let us, as the president would say, review the bidding here. First Bush beat John McCain in the 2000 primaries in part by scaring conservatives

ROMAN GENN

Ted Kennedy was briefly put on the federal no-fly list. Might it have looked something like this?

about the dangers of the campaign-finance legislation McCain was championing. Then, the weekend of his inauguration, he said that he had constitutional concerns about that legislation and would veto it if it reached his desk. A year later, he signed a substantially unaltered bill. This year, having noticed that the bill left organizations besides the parties mostly unregulated—and that Democrats had more of the George Soroses of the country behind them—Bush joined forces with McCain to get the Federal Election Commission to expand the scope of the bill ex post facto. Even Bush's staunchest supporters, if they look on this history without prejudice, must conclude that he is playing a cynical, and disgraceful, game with important constitutional freedoms.

■ At the recent UNITY conference for minority (and predominantly left-wing) reporters, Kerry said of Iraq: "Now, might we have wound up going to war with Saddam Hussein? You bet we might have." Such inspiring language will surely go down in the annals of great wartime rhetoric: "Might we have offered our blood, toil, tears, and sweat? You bet we might have." Or, "Might we have resolved that this nation should have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the peo-

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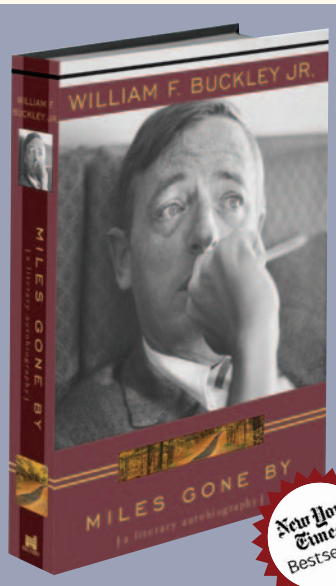
Popular conservative authors pictured (left to right) Dinesh D'Souza, Laura Ingraham, Robert Bork, Ann Coulter, Sean Hannity, Michael Savage, William F. Buckley, and William J. Bennett

Find out what's on the minds of America's Leading Conservatives



Miles Gone By

At long last, the book conservatives have been waiting for: William F. Buckley's autobiography. Woven from personal pieces composed over the course of a celebrated writing life of more than fifty years, Buckley delivers what everyone has been clamoring for but, characteristically with a surprising twist.

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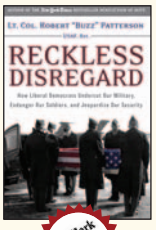

Reckless Disregard

Retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robert "Buzz" Patterson establishes that disregard for our national security is epidemic among Democrats. Read about those Democrats, about the irresponsible ways they turn a blind eye to American security—and why the 2004 election may determine our very survival as a nation.

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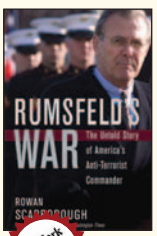

Rumsfeld's War

The inside story of why our victories in the terror war can be credited to one brilliant, brave, and tenacious man: Donald Rumsfeld. *Rumsfeld's War* takes you inside Rumsfeld's Pentagon, detailing the far-sighted, courageous decisions he has made to enable our military to fight this most unconventional of wars effectively.

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Rewriting History

Dick Morris knows the Clintons as a political advisor and personal confident. Now, he draws on his extensive interaction with them to deliver a blistering rebuttal to Hillary's deceitful memoir, *Living History*. Here, Morris exposes Hillary's attempts to remake her image in preparation for a future presidential bid.

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The Many Faces of John Kerry

Meet the real John Kerry: elitist, shape-shifting manipulator who will make America safer for terrorism and further Hillary's socialist dreams. Here, David Bossie, shows why it is so important for every American to show his disapproval of Kerry's leftist agenda on Election Day 2004.

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Treason

Ann Coulter on liberals: "They are either traitors or idiots, and on the matter of America's self-preservation, the difference is irrelevant." Coulter contends that liberals have stood with the enemies of American interests in every major crisis from the fight against Communism to today's war on terrorism.

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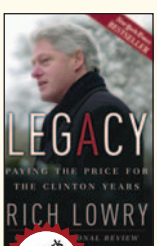

Legacy

Slick Willie has spent virtually every waking moment since he left office defending his legacy and now Hillary plans to run for president on it. But unfortunately for both Clintons, Rich Lowry destroys Clinton's record as president and proves that his administration was one of the most damaging for our nation.

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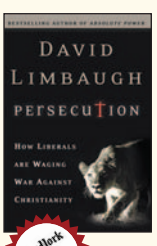

Persecution

Christians are increasingly being driven from public life, denied their First Amendment rights, and actively discriminated against for their beliefs. In this relentless exposé, best-selling author David Limbaugh rips apart the liberal hypocrisy that condones selective mistreatment of Christians.

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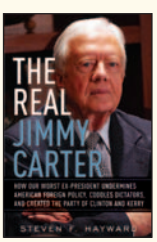

The Real Jimmy Carter

Jimmy Carter is enjoying a new day in the sun, with left-wing historians taking a "fresh look" at his disastrous presidency and trying to bamboozle Americans into thinking that it was actually successful. But now Steven F. Hayward demolishes the Carter myth—providing a wealth of devastating new information that proves that Carter was and is one of the worst American leaders in history.

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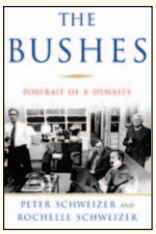

The Bushes: Portrait of a Dynasty

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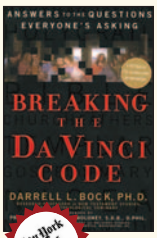

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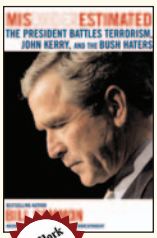

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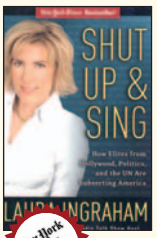

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In this refreshing and insightful look at the elites, Laura Ingraham unmasks the shallowness of elite thinking and reveals that it is they, not us, who are the stupid ones—and that loudmouth liberals like Barbra Streisand would do better to just "shut up and sing."

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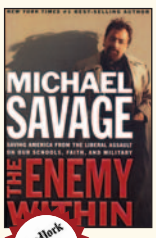

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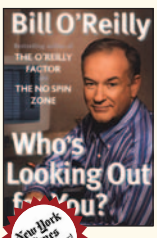

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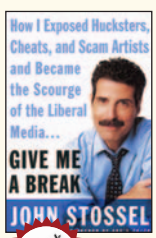
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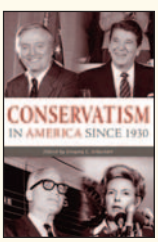

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The Week...

ple, for the people should not perish from the earth? You bet we might have." Now, might we have predicted such a preposterous straddle from the Democratic nominee? You bet we might have . . .

■ Democrats have spent most of this year accusing Bush of being trapped in Cold War thinking. (That is why, they say, he was not alert to the threat of al-Qaeda.) But now Bush is shaking up an outdated, Cold War pattern of military deployments, and the Democrats are objecting. Bush understands that the military's current posture—one originally designed to defend against a massive Soviet armored attack on Germany—no longer makes sense. Democrats say Bush is being dangerously unilateralist. But the planned repositioning has been worked out over the last two and a half years, during extensive consultations with allies. Maintaining heavy armored divisions in Germany indefinitely would be no more than mindless attachment to the status quo. The reorientation will emphasize lighter, more flexible forces, positioned farther south and east to be closer to the current, radical-Islamic threat, emanating from the Middle East and Central Asia. Bush has also done some new thinking in South Korea, where U.S. forces are positioned pretty much where they were in 1953 at the end of the Korean war. Bush will try to keep the same sheer firepower on the ground with fewer troops, while repositioning forces elsewhere in the region so they can respond quickly to a crisis not only in Korea but in other regional hotspots. All of this is so commonsensical that even Kerry in the past endorsed its broad outlines. But now it turns out that the only thing worse than being trapped in Cold War thinking is trying to move beyond it.

■ Some of us are already beginning to find Teresa Heinz Kerry's over-advertised sauciness, independence, and, for heaven's sake, "sexiness" a little wearisome. Her husband, however, is apparently still convinced that there is electoral gold to be mined from this vein of ore. Here he is in the current issue of the magazine *GQ*, offering advice to the men of America on choosing a mate: "Look for what gets your heart. Someone who excites you, turns you on. . . . It's a woman who loves being a woman. Who wears her womanhood. Who knows how to flirt and have fun. Smart. Confident. . . . And obviously sexy and saucy and challenging." Kerry also declared his fondness for Bob Dylan, and said he especially liked the song "Lay, Lady, Lay," and its line "Lay across my big brass bed." Enough, already! We are electing a chief executive, not a fertility god. Could we have a little more *Democracy in America* and a little less *Golden Bough*, please?

■ Kerry says that the Congressional Budget Office "documents what others and I have been saying for months. The tax burden of middle-class Americans has gone up, while the tax burden of the wealthiest people has gone down. That is wrong. That is morally wrong, and it's wrong from a policy point of view in America, and we have to change it." It is also wrong in the simpler sense of being factually mistaken. The CBO analysis says that middle-class Americans have seen their federal tax burden go *down*. It also says that they are paying a larger *proportion* of all federal revenues. There are two reasons for this change. A progressive tax code almost guarantees that when incomes fall, as in a recession, the share of taxes paid by the rich will go down. (Think about it this way: Assume that the richest fifth of Americans in 2001 were still the richest fifth in 2004—but now, many of them have dropped down a tax bracket.) Second, Bush reduced the income tax while not reducing the payroll tax. Since the income tax is highly progressive while the payroll tax is not, an even, across-the-board reduction in the income tax will make the total federal tax burden less progressive. Note also the sleight of hand going on here. Liberals act as though Bush is an enemy of the worker because he has not cut the payroll tax. But what would happen if he did propose to cut it? Let's say that he proposed to let people keep some of their payroll taxes as long as they kept the difference in a savings account. In fact, Bush has proposed exactly that. The liberals' reaction has been to flay him for endangering Social Security, which the payroll tax funds. They want to have it every which way, depending on the political needs of the moment.

■ Under a federal law passed during the Depression, hourly workers in the private sector are supposed to receive time-and-a-half pay for every hour they spend on the job in excess of 40 a week. President Bush has proposed amending this to permit "flextime"—i.e., extra time off instead of extra pay, which would be based on a pay period of 80 hours over two weeks. So, a person might work more than 40 hours one week and less than 40 the next, and receive the same pay for both weeks. This is sound policy, especially when two-earner families and single mothers are struggling to balance the demands of work and home. It is also tremendously popular. About one-third of the federal workforce currently takes advantage of similar options, and (according to an Employment Policy Foundation survey) three-quarters of Americans would like private-sector workers to have the choice as well. Democrats and their labor-union allies are dead set against it; the Kerry campaign arranged a conference call for Hillary Clinton to tell reporters that the Bush administration simply wants to hurt workers by stealing their overtime pay. If the intention of the

Nagging Doubts

John Kerry's service records lie
Locked up like gold in Fort Knox. Why?
If what this easy rider said
Can, with a key, be warranted,
For God's sake, let the sunshine in!
It's getting under Edwards's skin
And leaves the moderates unmanned.
Hey, don't miss Unfit for Command.

—W. H. von Dreele

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proposal were to hurt workers, Bush probably wouldn't be trying to win votes with it.

■ The American Federation of Teachers circulated a study saying that charter schools are doing worse than traditional public schools, and the *New York Times* ran a front-pager practically declaring the case closed. But education reformers questioned the findings. When you corrected for the racial makeup of the schools, the difference in test scores disappeared: Black students in charter schools are not doing worse than black students in traditional public schools, and the same is true for Hispanics. Also, it stands to reason that kids in charter schools are kids whose parents were dissatisfied with their previous schools—and they may be students with bigger problems. All that said, there has been something a bit too defensive about the reformers' response to the study. Charter students may be doing no worse than other students; but aren't they supposed to be doing better? The truth is that there are many good charter schools, and many bad ones. Very few places have the mechanisms in place to ensure that successful schools gain students and money, and failing ones lose them. When those mechanisms—ideally including a robust program of school choice—are in place, we should expect to see improvements for the kids in the new schools and in the old ones. Charter schools at least have some of the elements of accountability. Perhaps the most foolish line in the *Times* story came when the reporter noted that more than 80 charter schools have been forced to close, as though it were a bad thing. This country needs more failing schools to close down, not fewer.

■ After the Democratic convention became an infomercial for embryo-killing research—with Ron Reagan touting the possibility that human cloning would allow for personal "biological repair kits"—the Bush administration decided to start defending its policy. Laura Bush has taken the first step: clearing up the Democrats' deliberate attempt to mislead people into thinking that Bush has a "ban" on stem-cell research, when all he has done is to limit federal funding for the type of stem-cell research that kills human embryos. Mrs. Bush also criticized the exaggerated claims being made for the research, which she rightly said cruelly manipulate the hopes of sick people and their families. Research should be encouraged, she said, but in a spirit of sobriety and with due regard for the moral norm of not taking nascent human lives. John Edwards, meanwhile, said that federally funded research would have to be cleared by ethics committees when Kerry and he are in charge. But ethics committees are a poor substitute for having sound moral principles oneself. The president does not have to worry about losing the public on this issue during the debates to come: He can easily defend his policies as reasonable, and make an issue of Kerry's support for cloning. The political question to which we do not have an answer is how many sick

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people Kerry and Edwards can delude into thinking that cures are just a federal subsidy away.

■ In 2000, Bush won Nevada's four electoral votes by a mere four percentage points. John Kerry is trying to take the state's votes away from him by playing on Nevada's fears about the burial of nuclear waste beneath Yucca Mountain. The burial plans, he says, are "a symbol of the recklessness and the arrogance" of the Bush administration. It so happens that Kerry supported the 1987 law that led scientists to conclude that Yucca Mountain is the safest place in America to store the waste. John Edwards favored the site until just hours before landing on the Democrats' national ticket. True, the White House recently suffered a setback when a court said that safety guarantees stretching 10,000 years into the future aren't good enough. But that doesn't change the fact that Yucca is by far the best depository in the country, and Kerry knows it.

■ Kerry opposes the death penalty. He used to oppose it even for terrorists, but has had a change of heart in time for this election. President Bush supports it. So why isn't he mentioning it? There is a stealthy campaign against the death penalty in America. It seeks to use the courts, and inflated assertions about the number of innocents who have been sent to death row, to

Chasing the Losers

MILTON FRIEDMAN recently wrote that the enduring lesson of the last century is that "capitalism creates wealth; and socialism is a failure." Then he lamented that many politicians in America have deduced from this that "what America needs is more socialism." Count John Kerry in that camp.

With full-blown socialism now tossed in the dustbin of history, two competing economic models remain: free-market capitalism—let us call this "the American model"—and Western European socialism, sometimes euphemistically referred to as "the Third Way." What are the tenets of this bastardized form of command-and-control economics? Highly generous welfare benefits for the unemployed; workplace rules that make it difficult for employers to hire and fire; prohibitions against plant closings; mandatory worker-benefit packages that include health insurance; child-care allowances; paid parental leave; lavish retirement benefits; four to six weeks of vacation for employees; minimum-wage requirements that can exceed $10 an hour; shortened work weeks; and high taxes on business and labor to pay for these benefits.

TAXES DESTROY JOBS

Country	Tax Wedge	GDP Growth	Unemployment
United States	15.5%	4.3%	5.5%
Switzerland	17.8%	0.0%	4.2%
United Kingdom	18.3%	2.8%	4.8%
Australia	20.4%	4.0%	5.9%
Japan	23.2%	3.4%	5.0%
Canada	23.3%	1.6%	7.4%
Austria	29.5%	0.8%	4.4%
Denmark	30.1%	0.3%	6.5%
Spain	30.9%	2.7%	11.2%
Germany	33.5%	0.2%	10.3%
Netherlands	33.7%	-0.5%	6.2%
Italy	35.5%	0.1%	8.4%
Belgium	39.0%	1.2%	12.8%
Sweden	39.5%	1.9%	6.0%
France	40.0%	0.6%	9.6%
Correlation With Tax Wedge:		-0.55	0.63

The U.S. economy has some of these features, but to a much lesser extent. We take a more laissez-faire attitude toward employer-employee relations. The American Left cannot stand this. Why can't we be more like Europe, John Kerry seems to ask almost daily on the campaign stump? Of course, those suffering from Euro-envy also tend to be the same economists and advisers who asked, 15 years ago, why America couldn't be more like Japan.

I call Euro-envy the chasing-the-losers syndrome. The biggest victims of the worker "protections" in Europe have been European workers themselves. The chart below tells the story: The higher the tax rate on workers, the higher the unemployment rate and the lower the economic-growth rate. For all the talk of a "jobless recovery" in America, our unemployment rate of 5.5 percent compares favorably to Europe's 8 to 9 percent. Germany and France—two of the nations with the highest tax rates and the most socialistic economic institutions—have two of the highest unemployment rates in the industrialized world and economic-growth rates that can be detected only with the aid of a high-powered microscope.

Richard Vedder, an economist at Ohio University and co-author of *Out of Work*—a classic book on unemployment—calls the tax rate on labor the "tax wedge." The wedge is the difference between what an employee is paid, and what the employer has to pay in taxes and other costs to hire that worker. Mandatory worker benefits raise the cost to employers of hiring new workers, so, surprise, surprise, businesses cut back on employment to avoid these hidden costs. The *Wall Street Journal* recently noted that a huge number of firms in America have precisely 49 workers—because many labor laws begin to apply to firms once they have 50 employees. Hiring the 50th worker is an expensive proposition.

The nations with the most booming economies are not in Europe. Russia, China, and India are embracing capitalism, the flat tax, privatization of government assets, and private-property rights. And the formerly Communist nations of Eastern Europe want no part of their poverty-inducing socialist past. The Third Way still leads to the Third World.

—STEPHEN MOORE

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The publication of the 9/11 commission's report provides an opportunity to reflect not just on the lack of preparedness for the history-altering terrorist attacks but also on the realities of the post–Cold War world.

The nearly 600-page report from the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States paints a disturbing picture of a government largely unprepared for the suicide assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But what it points to in the future is even more chilling. The report reminds us that Osama bin Laden and his fellow extremists are cold-blooded fanatics and that no negotiations, compromise, or appeasement will placate them.

The 9/11 commission report will be debated and dissected for some time to come, helping us to better understand the vast challenges we face. Perhaps it, along with the daily news from Baghdad, will at last pour cold water on the assumption that we are in another fledgling Cold War–like struggle. The current antiterrorism campaign is not about deterrence, containment, or chesslike moves on a global board.

Historical analogies are instructive. Munich and Vietnam still hold lessons about appeasement and protracted conflicts in peripheral areas. **The battle against Islamic fundamentalist terrorism is not another Cold War**, however. Yes, it will drag on for decades, like the Cold War, and resemble aspects similar to the Soviet standoff. Public diplomacy—how America spreads its message of hope, democracy, and tolerance to the world—will certainly be rekindled. Our antiterrorism struggle will necessitate alliances and occasional cooperation with unsavory regimes—all aspects of the former East-West rivalry—but it is not analogous.

The doctrine of preemption, of striking before being attacked, is a fundamentally different concept than the Cold War restraint and is here to stay no matter who wins the presidential election in November. **With American civilians and soldiers dying by jihadi bullets and beheadings, clearly we are in a hot war, not the old, icy standoff with Moscow.**

Although the degree of preemptive attack should be weighed soberly, **terrorism cannot be prevented by defensive measures. No White House occupant can simply react to events.** Nuclear and biological weapons in terrorist hands can kill far too many people for a reactive posture; jihad upends the former challenge and response formula. A glacially paced strategic response born of Cold War thinking will not cool the fires of jihad.

We may not engage in another ambitious Iraq war or even an Afghanistan intervention. America has already scaled down to smaller preemptive actions from these two major counterterrorism ventures. The United States is opening bare-bones bases from which to launch preemptive attacks. Special Forces teams have been deployed in a globe-spanning belt stretching from Latin America and the Philippines through Central Asia, East Africa, and the Maghreb to train local forces to battle terrorists.

Future strategies to nip terrorist plots in the bud might include surgical airstrikes, cloak-and-dagger operations, and even smash-and-dash commando raids to take out nuclear facilities or eliminate terrorist camps. The old Cold War business as usual is over and so should be the analogous thinking.

—Thomas Henriksen

Thomas Henriksen is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

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The Week...

restrict the punishment and eventually abolish it. That campaign had some success for a time. In polls, support for the death penalty dropped ten to fifteen points. But even at the low point—in the May 2001 Gallup poll—some 65 percent of Americans supported it while only 27 percent opposed it. In the May 2004 poll, support was back up to 71 percent. During the same period, the percentage of Americans who say the death penalty is too infrequently imposed jumped ten points, to 48 percent. Bush should acknowledge the honorable opposition of many people to the death penalty, while also noting that they are not a majority, and that his judges, unlike Kerry's, will allow the majority to proceed as it deems just.

■ James McGreevey announced that he would step down as governor of New Jersey after his lover, Golan Cipel, threatened him with blackmail and the like (this is McGreevey's story). The governor had given Mr. Cipel a $110,000-a-year job as special assistant for homeland security. Cipel had to vacate it when it became clear that he was manifestly unqualified (an Israeli national, he could not receive classified security briefings). McGreevey found him a second job, special counsel to the governor, at the same salary, but Cipel was forced to disgorge that too. McGreevey, who is married, portrayed the whole episode as a lugubrious Calvary of coming out. "It is my prayer," he wrote in the *New York Times*, "that I will now be free to . . . integrate my sexuality with my daily life." This is cant. McGreevey's sexuality was well integrated with his daily life: He is a sleazy pol who ignored his responsibilities in order to enrich friends. There is nothing new in that, particularly in the Garden State. Homo-ness is only the flavor of the year.

■ Crooked John Rowland, out in Connecticut, skeevy James McGreevey, going out in New Jersey—and between them, George Pataki of New York, who has found the Zen way to statesmanship. He is noteworthy for what he is not.

■ The Najaf crisis drags on as we go to press. The constantly shifting pronouncements—one hour, rebel punk-cleric Moqtada al-Sadr is going to be definitively smashed; the next, he is going to be given one more last chance—are mind-numbingly incoherent. But this is war and negotiation, Arab-style. Since an Arab government—Prime Minister Allawi's—is calling the shots, it is what should be expected for the duration. Since al-Sadr represents the first real challenge to the central government's authority, we should nonetheless be encouraging Allawi to deal with him harshly. He shouldn't be allowed to shoot his way into the cabinet, and defeating him soundly would send a useful signal to Iran, which still has not been properly warned off interfering in Iraq by the Bush administration. This magazine has constantly said that the development of a new Iraq will be a messy process. Najaf is a reminder of just how messy.

■ When Uday Hussein ran Iraqi sport, athletes were tortured for losing. In Athens, Iraq's Olympic soccer team lost a match to Paraguay, but beat Costa Rica, Portugal, and Australia for a berth in the semi-finals, without a torturer in sight. The Bush administration is properly proud of this effect of its policies, and right to mention it in political ads. It could even mention the fact that some Iraqi soccer players have criticized Bush severely: Iraq is now, after all, a free country. The same cannot be said of Iran, whose world-class judoka, Arash Miresmaeili, bowed out of a match with Ehud Vaks, an Israeli. Miresmaeili came to his weigh-in four pounds overweight, thus technically avoiding a politicized default. But Iran's president Mohammad Khatami said that he would be "recorded in the history of Iranian glories," thus displaying the twin signs of a dictatorship: grotesque ideas of glory (in this case, No peace to the Zionist entity!) and the capacity to enforce them.

■ Sofia Sakorafa, a Greek politician and javelin thrower, tried to compete in the Athens Olympics as a Palestinian, but was ruled ineligible, which makes us wonder when the Palestinians fielded their first Olympic team. (They sent a delegation to Munich in 1972, but it was unofficial.)

■ Hail to the Thief? Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez beat back a recall referendum with a remarkable feat of electoral transubstantiation: He changed an overwhelmingly hostile exit-poll majority (59 percent against him) into an overwhelmingly supportive ballot-box majority (59 percent in favor). Yet two international observers—Jimmy Carter and the secretary general of the Organization of American States, César Gaviria—instantly anointed Mr. Chávez the victor by endorsing the government's tally. They had performed only a perfunctory "quick count" of a small sample of voting machines. The democratic opposition charged that the electronic-voting machines had been rigged. The Carter Center and the OAS were embarrassed into conducting an audit. But this was limited to just 150 of the 20,000 machines. The result still favored Chávez. Mr. Gaviria was circumspect: "We cannot say categorically there was not fraud, we are saying we didn't find it." They should look harder before jumping in next time.

■ We have argued before in this space that any nation that has a minister of culture in its government is well along on the road to perdition. Here is a confirming instance. At a concert in São Paolo, Brazil's leading crooner, Gilberto Gil, who is also the nation's—yes—minister of culture, sang a 1960s song called "Soy Loco Por Ti, America" ("I'm Crazy About You, America"). While he did so, the visual display behind him showed a picture of George W. Bush with a noose around his neck and the slogan "Morra, Bush, Morra" ("Die, Bush, Die"). The display also featured images of Che Guevara and Pancho Villa. There was applause from the audience. Gil's agent later denied any maleficent intent on the singer's part, blaming the incident on a rogue video jockey.

■ Less than a month after its members voted in the U.N. General Assembly against Israel's security fence—which prevents terrorists from sneaking into Israel and blowing up civilians there—the European Union reportedly has plans to build a separation fence of its own. That fence, says the Israeli business daily *Globes*, will wall off new member states Poland and Hungary from their eastern neighbors, Belarus and Ukraine, to

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prevent migrants from entering the EU. Other critics of Israel's fence are also building fences of their own. India is constructing a permanent barrier in Kashmir to prevent Pakistani militants from infiltrating, and Saudi Arabia is constructing an anti-terror wall along its border with Yemen. But the EU does have this distinction: It is considering bids from Israeli companies that specialize in security systems, including the main contractor for Israel's fence. If the EU hires an Israeli company to build its very own international partition and *still* calls Israel's last-ditch security measure an abomination, now that'll be chutzpah.

■ Communists are in some ways very conservative—for example, in the methods they use to discredit and neutralize their enemies. Remember how uncooperative Western visitors to the old USSR had a way of being discovered in compromising circumstances in hotel rooms? The Communists of Beijing obviously believe there is still some mileage in that old stunt. Mr. Alex Ho, a pro-democracy (and therefore, of course, anti-Beijing) candidate in the forthcoming elections in Hong Kong, was arrested in a mainland hotel room while on a business trip. He was charged with having hired a prostitute. Mr. Ho signed a confession when told that, if he didn't, he'd be charged instead with rape, a capital offense in the People's Republic. He is now serving six months in detention. Apparently a trial was not thought necessary. The sentence will disqualify Mr. Ho from standing in Hong Kong's September elections. It will also, Beijing no doubt hopes, discourage others from pro-democracy activism. Old Chinese saying: "Kill a chicken to scare the monkeys."

■ Remember lustration? That was the process designed by the Czech authorities after the Velvet Revolution to remove their former Communist persecutors from public life, and if possible bring them to court to account for their crimes. The file against Karel Hoffmann is thick. On the eve of the Soviet invasion of his country in August 1968, he was the official who ordered Czechoslovak radio and television to stop broadcasting, which of course crippled resistance. From 1971 right up to the collapse of Communism he was a member of the ruling presidium, an unrepentant hardliner and Soviet apologist. In long-drawn legal proceedings, the original charge of high treason for his role in 1968 was softened to one of sabotage. In his defense, he maintained that he had shut down broadcasting at the time because otherwise the Communist regime would have fallen as it finally did in 1989. Pankrac prison in Prague was where many brave patriots and anti-Communists once were persecuted, and some of them died there. After due process, Hoffman has just begun a four-year sentence in that very prison. Although he's 80 now, he still has time to reflect on the harm he has done, and to get the point that in human affairs justice has priority over brute power.

■ BBC presenter John Humphrys says he "bloody well hopes" his broadcasts reflect a liberal bias. "Do we want to return to capital punishment or to see homosexuals persecuted? No. That is a broadly liberal position. And that's what the nation is." The nation begs to differ, at least on the death penalty: Two out of three Britons want to reinstate it, according to an April 2003 poll in the *Guardian*. We recommend that Mr. Humphrys take a look at the survey data, to find out why over half of the British public doesn't trust the BBC.

■ For years now—decades—conservatives have made a specialty of noting and lampooning the obits of Communists published in the *New York Times*. Often, they're not acknowledged as Communists at all: They were those of "strong beliefs," or "unpopular opinions," or "radical politics," and so on. They "fell afoul of the McCarthyites." The *Times* is amazingly reluctant to call a Communist a Communist—and if it does, it perfumes that commitment, somehow. Well, we recently spotted a new twist: The composer Elmer Bernstein died, after a long and rich career, spent mainly in Hollywood (*The Magnificent Seven*, *The Great Escape*, *True Grit* . . .). The *Times* wrote, "His career was sidetracked in 1950 for five years because he considered himself a Communist." *Because he considered himself a Communist!* We note and lampoon this because we consider ourselves conservative, anti-Communist, and aware of when a newspaper acts like an ass.

■ Lewis Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, has an essay in its September issue on conservatives. The issue came out in mid-August. In his essay, Lapham reflects on the "rich man's dream of heaven that placed Ronald Reagan in the White House in 1980 and provides the current Bush administration with the platform on which the candidate was trundled into New York City this August with Arnold Schwarzenegger, the heavy law enforcement, and the paper elephants." Lapham continues, "The speeches in Madison Square Garden affirmed the great truths now routinely preached from the pulpits of Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*—government the problem, not the solution; the social contract a dead letter; the free market the answer to every maiden's prayer—and while listening to the hollow rattle of the rhetorical brass and tin, I remembered the question that [Richard] Hoftstadter didn't stay to answer. How did a set of ideas both archaic and bizarre make its way into the center ring of the American political circus?" A weighty question. Yet not so puzzling as how Lapham can have listened to the Republicans' speeches before they were made. The Republican convention is to be from August 30 to September 2, and Lapham's essay was out by at least August 19. Perhaps this is why Lapham can affect world-weary sophistication in his every essay: He really has seen and heard it all—even before it happens. Except, we guess, for his publication schedule.

■ "How small, of all that human hearts endure, / That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!" Those words of Dr. Johnson's are doubly pertinent, as we careen into the madness of an election homestretch, and as we note the passing, at age 91, of Julia Child. With gusto, humor, clarity, and warmth, she educated the palettes of Americans, explaining, without vulgarizing, French cooking in her cookbooks and on her long-running TV show, *The French Chef*. She had her crotchets, and she expressed them without hesitation. "I hate grilled vegetables," she once said. "They're either burned, partially burned, or raw." The net result of her career was to make the texture of daily life more varied and more pleasing. Nothing wrong with simple

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The Week...

American home cooking—but isn't it better to also have fancy French home cooking? R.I.P.

■ Czeslaw Milosz was a man of great gifts as a poet, thinker, and linguist, but above all he was a free spirit. Physically he looked the part too, as though he had been carved out of some very hard piece of wood. His life was a wonderfully enhancing response to the 20th century and its brutality. Born in Polish-speaking Lithuania in 1911, he was originally a subject of the last Russian czar. As a Pole, he began to write poems, and in due course—in the Polish underground army—he fought the Nazis. When the Communists came to power after the war, Milosz defected and soon published *The Captive Mind*, a vivid and poignant study of the damage Communism was doing to everything human and spiritual. For a while he lived in Paris but the abasement of French intellectuals to the Soviet Union disgusted him. A naturalized American, he settled in San Francisco, lecturing at Berkeley (apparently he found this an improvement). Eventually he was awarded the Nobel prize. In support of Solidarity, he made a very public visit to the Gdansk strikers. "What is poetry which does not save / Nations or people?" one of his poems asked. He had the satisfaction of helping to save his own nation, and many people elsewhere. Returning to live in Cracow at the end of his life, he had survived a cruel totalitarian epoch to become a citizen of the world, a rare and noble figure. R.I.P.

■ Al Gore got a speeding ticket while driving a rented car—a most Earth-unfriendly Lincoln four-door, according to the ticket—on a visit to relatives in Oregon. He was doing 75 in a 55 zone. The state trooper who stopped Gore said that the ex-veep was polite throughout the encounter. Earlier rumors that Gore rolled his eyes, shook his head, and sighed ostentatiously while the ticket was being written up seem to have been unfounded.

■ A joke we heard: Kerry and Edwards are at McDonald's, doing some campaigning. An employee, in her excitement, spills some coffee on Kerry's hand. Edwards wants to sue—but Kerry wants to write it up for his fourth Purple Heart.

CAMPAIGN 2004

Race to the Swift

Speaking on behalf of Vietnam veterans in his Senate testimony on April 22, 1971, John Kerry said, "We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories of that service . . ." Thirty-three years later, it's clear that his plea fell on deaf ears. Kerry recalls his Vietnam service in virtually every campaign speech he makes. At the Boston convention, his four-month stint in Vietnam was repeatedly invoked as his primary qualification for the presidency.

Kerry's problem is that those who served alongside him haven't forgotten either. Many Vietnam veterans remember that Kerry slandered their service when he claimed they were responsible for widespread atrocities. These veterans include 250 of his Swift boat comrades, whose organization, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, has taken to the airwaves to accuse him of lying about his record and betraying his fellow veterans. In particular, they say that in telling the U.S. Senate about non-existent American war crimes, he did something that our POWs refused to do under torture.

The book that has thrown Kerry on the defensive is not *Unfit for Command* so much as *Tour of Duty*, the authorized biography written by the pro-Kerry historian Douglas Brinkley. Until the book's publication in January, Kerry's fellow Swift boat veterans were unaware of his exact version of their alleged atrocities and his alleged heroics. Some of them had come to Kerry's rescue in the past, when he was accused of committing war crimes of his own (these statements are now used to challenge the Swift boat vets' consistency). The vets intended to refute Kerry's allegations of atrocities, but found that their eyewitness accounts contradicted Kerry's version of his exploits.

Why should it matter? First, there is the fact that Kerry has put his Vietnam experience at the center of his campaign. If it turns out that his account of that experience is based on exaggerations or lies, it is a damning indictment of his candidacy, on his own terms. Even if Kerry had not made Vietnam such a large part of his campaign, this controversy would be important, since dishonesty (even relatively minor incidents of it) with regard to war stories and decorations has ruined careers. Finally, there is Kerry's 1971 testimony, which he has never retracted and which still stands as testament to his belief that the American military was a criminal force in Vietnam. The Swift boat vets can be forgiven for asking whether someone who believes this country would order such crimes, and that its men in uniform would "routinely" carry them out, is fit to be commander-in-chief.

The merits of the charges about Kerry's service and how he won his Purple Hearts and Silver and Bronze Stars are difficult to disentangle (see Byron York's piece in this issue for a thorough evaluation). Kerry seems to have lied when he repeatedly claimed to have spent Christmas 1968 in Cambodia, an event allegedly "seared" in his memory. His campaign now allows that his memory was faulty. There are also legitimate questions about whether two of his Purple Hearts were awarded for wounds that were accidentally self-inflicted. The Purple Hearts matter so much because Kerry used them to take advantage of a Navy regulation that allowed him to leave Vietnam after four months of combat. Kerry's story about how he received his Silver Star—dashing ashore to shoot a wounded Viet Cong—holds up better. Finally, there is doubt whether, in the Bronze Star incident, he really rescued Jim Rassmann from the water under a hail of enemy bullets, as the Kerry campaign and Rassmann have repeated ad nauseam.

The "fog of war" no doubt explains some of the conflicting accounts, which may never be resolved. But we still don't have all the information. For months, the Swift boat vets have been calling on John Kerry to authorize the release of his complete Navy records, only selected portions of which have been

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made available by his campaign. We should still see his full personnel file and his medical records. For good measure, Kerry should release his wartime journals and his films of himself from Vietnam. The press can do its part by not acting as though its sole job were to discredit the Swift boat vets, and by reporting instead on the substance of their allegations (as Michael Dobbs recently did in an evenhanded front-page *Washington Post* story on the Bronze Star incident).

Kerry so far has hoped to get away with falsely charging that Bush is responsible for the ads and calling the Swift boat vets "liars," an accusation that hasn't affected them much since they have been called much worse by John Kerry. The contradiction at the center of Kerry's political persona is that he now wants to pretend that Vietnam was a noble war populated by American heroes, when he made his name by smearing it as an unworthy war waged by war criminals. Kerry can probably never fully resolve that contradiction, although he could make a start by repudiating and apologizing for his 1971 remarks. But that might require more moral courage than Kerry has ever mustered, in Vietnam or after.

notes & asides

■ Memo to: WFB
From: Linda Bridges
Re: *Firing Line*

Here is the information you need, pursuant to several inquiries from readers who wish access to *Firing Line*.

The Hoover Institution in California, which owns and houses the tapes, has been working prodigiously to make the material accessible. This is a huge undertaking. For one thing, many of the early tapes were in different formats from the current standard. Copying them has to be done carefully to keep them from deteriorating.

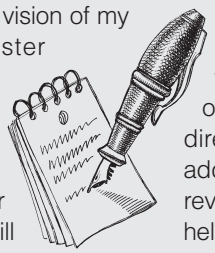
But the archivist, Dr. Elena S. Danielson, reports that, thanks to a grant from the National Television and Video Preservation Foundation, plus "funds donated by a *Firing Line* admirer" who wants anonymity, the work is going forward at a good pace.

As of today, purchasers can get copies of any of the 400 programs "that have received preservation treatment" (there are 1,504 *Firing Lines* in all). More are being added to the list of available shows as time and money permit. The entire descriptive catalogue we produced after the program ended in 1999 can be accessed at http://hoohila.stanford.edu/firingline.

Visitors to the website can request transcripts of any of the programs. An index to the catalogue indicates which of the programs are currently available on VHS.

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: Since you have indicated in a past issue that it is "more permissible, by idiomatic usage," to say "that's him," rather than the grammatically correct "that's he," perhaps I should infer the answer to my question, which is similar. If you will indulge me, however, I will ask it anyway.

I am a sometime essayist and critic, and recently found myself writing the phrase, ". . . the other one is me." Although I believe that this is certainly preferable to the odd-sounding "the other one is I," a horrible vision of my third-grade teacher Sister Mary Joseph coming toward me with a rather large ruler in her hand has prompted me to seek the advice of a higher authority, namely you. I will consider your ruling to be the last word on the subject, as usual.



Your obedient servant,
Bernard J. McBride
Long Island City, N.Y.

Dear Mr. McBride: Hmm. How about a break to take on the pressure in your mind when you speak the words so? "The other one is . . . [aposiopesis] I."

Cordially, WFB

■ Dear Mr. Buckley: The special edition of National Review published to honor President Reagan was wonderful. I intend to keep that issue for my grandchildren to read some day while they are studying the Reagan years in school.

I have only one criticism. You mentioned that you were talking with Mr. Reagan while you and your wife were traveling with Mr. and Mrs. Reagan to a vacation. You wrote, "Helicopters, even Air Force One helicopters, are pretty noisy." You are mistaken. President Reagan did not fly in a presidential helicopter staffed by the Air Force. President Reagan was helicoptered in Marine One during his years in the White House.

My brother, who retired from the Marine Corps after serving for 31 years, spent four years in the HMX unit that supports the presidential helicopter. He happened to serve from 1982 to 1986, during Mr. Reagan's administration. He traveled to China with the president, and he was the pilot who landed in front of the Capitol, bringing Mr. Reagan directly from his trip to Reykjavik to address Congress. He respected and revered this great man who treated a helicopter pilot with the same respect with which he treated heads of state. My brother was in the capital when they brought Mr. Reagan's body back. He walked along the processional route accompanying the president's body to the Capitol Rotunda. He then stood in line and waited to pay his respects to Mr. Reagan. He admired this man and he felt he was returning the respect shown to him by Mr. Reagan.

Sincerely,
Catherine A. Genovese
Jackson, N.J.

Dear Mrs. Genovese: How very kind of you to write. I am glad to hear your brother's story, and thank you for correcting me!

Cordially,

—WFB

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GARY HERSHORN/REUTERS

If He Wins

RAMESH PONNURU

If the Democrats win the White House, it will be because liberals are more worried about a reelected Bush than conservatives are about a President Kerry. Conservatives have various complaints about President Bush: He has imposed some tariffs. He has increased spending in general, and especially expanded Medicare. You know the list. And conservatives figure that they do not have much to fear from Kerry, who will almost certainly have to contend with a Republican Congress. These considerations will not lead conservatives to vote for Kerry, but might lead enough of them to stay home in November to give him the election.

Kerry appears to have no similar problem in getting his supporters to their polling places. Many of them think that Bush's reelection would be, roughly speaking, the end of the world. They may not be enthralled by Kerry, but hostility to Bush will do the work that affection for their candidate will not. So Kerry is free to win over undecided voters while Bush has to tend his base. Even if Bush succeeds in getting conservatives to turn out for him, the need to spend time courting them may cost him the election.

If Kerry wins, however, I suspect that conservatives will come to regret their relative complacency about this election. The prevailing assumption on both sides of the partisan divide has been that liberals and Democrats have more at stake this year than conservatives and Republicans: Only the former might get shut out of national power if Bush wins. "The Right keeps the House, the Right keeps the Senate," exults conservative activist Grover Norquist. The assumption that liberals have more at stake may not, however, be correct.

Let's start with the War on Terror. Most conservatives support its vigorous prosecution, including an effort to transform the politics of the Middle East. We may not always support the discrete moves of the Bush administration, or even understand them; but we think it has been more right than not. What would John Kerry do as president? It has been hard to glean from his rhetoric. He appears more and more intent on bringing the troops home as early as possible. Much of his base would be pleased by a withdrawal from Iraq. Moreover, his election would be taken as a definitive national rejection of the Bush approach to the War on Terror, and probably not just the details of its execution. Foreign leaders (and foreign publics) might be more tolerant of hawkishness from a newly elected Kerry than from a reelected Bush; but that effect would be more than offset by Kerry's need to respect the sentiment that would have gotten him elected.

The domestic prosecution of the war would also suffer. Kerry has blown hot and cold about the Patriot Act. Since he beat Howard Dean in the primaries, Kerry's aides have taken to saying that he is a stronger supporter of it than Bush. But Kerry remains a co-sponsor of a bill that would weaken it. It would weaken it only marginally, for the most part. But the pre-Patriot experience of terrorists' barely slipping through the fingers of law enforcement suggests that technical legal changes can matter.

Which brings us to the courts. In the 1996 and 2000 elections, both left- and right-wing activists said that the Supreme Court was up for grabs. It turned out that the composition of the Court did not change. But it is hard to see all of the current justices hanging on for another term. Given that the Court has settled some important issues by 5-4 votes, the power to nominate justices matters. If Kerry gets to replace Chief Justice Rehnquist or Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, school choice, in any strong form, is dead. Some recent votes on stays of execution suggest that a Kerry appointment might also bring about a Court that is much more willing to restrict the death penalty. The likelihood of a reversal of *Roe* during the next generation will slip to the vanishing point.

The courts have imposed some modest limits on the abuse of litigation, and even some Democratic appointees have supported those limits—notably Justice Stephen Breyer. The presence of John

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Edwards on the ticket probably means that Kerry would not be nominating such jurists. The modest limits we have could well be abandoned. Certainly, many of the Bush administration's deregulatory moves, which have often been designed to eliminate the potential for abusive lawsuits, would be reversed.

Economic conservatives would see other defeats, too. Bush's tax cuts are scheduled to expire, which will put Kerry in a strong position to see that the top tax rates go back up to Clinton-era levels. A Republican Congress might stop some of Kerry's trillions in promised spending initiatives, and force him to scale down his ambitious health-care proposal. On the other hand, Kerry would probably accelerate the trend toward price controls on prescription medicines. Social Security reformers might have a chance to get private accounts in a second Bush term; not so under Kerry. Opportunities for trade would also be missed. Kerry's promised review of existing trade agreements probably would not amount to much. But new trade agreements would be hard to come by: Kerry, along with almost everyone in his party, supports them only under conditions that poor countries are unlikely to accept.

Economic conservatives, social conservatives, law-and-order conservatives, hawkish conservatives: Every faction of the Republican party, with the possible exception of the immigration restrictionists, would lose ground if Kerry wins. Conservatives sometimes overestimate their political strength, assuming that President Bush could, if he wanted, govern much more conservatively—and fantasizing that the Republicans would come back to the true faith if Bush lost. But the Republican response to defeat will probably not be to move *right* on stem-cell funding, or the minimum wage, or Medicare. The constituency for shrinking government is small. More people want increased government benefits than want tax cuts. Under the circumstances, Bush has governed about as conservatively as a president could.

John Judis and Ruy Teixeira have argued that a Democratic majority is emerging because of demographic trends such as immigration. If they are right—I'm not entirely sold, but they make a strong case—then the conventional wis-

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dom about the Democrats having more to fear from the elections is upside down. If they are right, a second term for Bush offers a last chance for Republicans to impose the reforms they seek, or to change the terms of political debate. Without that second term, on the other hand, they risk long-term decline. If social conservatives react to the decisive dashing of their hopes for the Supreme Court by giving up on politics, the Republicans will not be able to regain a majority.

And what if Republican economists are right, and we are in the early stages of a longish boom—a boom that will get going over the next four years regardless of who holds the White House? In that case, the 2008 race will be the fifth time in a row that Republicans have fought a presidential election in which perceptions of the economy worked against them. The view that Republicans are the party of recession could solidify in the public mind, in much the way it did during the decades following the crash of 1929. If we have already gotten through the hardest period of postwar Iraq, the Democrats may well also gain an edge on war and peace.

These are reasons for conservatives not to sit out this election. Here is another one: Over the last four years, much of liberalism and the Democratic party has gone on a bender. Liberalism has produced books and movies that are rancid with paranoia, and Democrats have not just refused to condemn them but have actively celebrated them. Not a day goes by without a liberal accusation that Bush "lied," an accusation that usually turns out on inspection to be an example of liberal nitpicking. Well-qualified Bush nominees to the courts have been filibustered on flimsy pretexts. Democrats have acted as though normal politicking by the Republicans—as in the Senate race against Max Cleland—are an incipient coup. The allegations that the 2000 election was stolen; the political lectures from Hollywood; the symbiosis that has developed between the foreign policies of the Democratic party and those of the French government; the activist, conspiracy-inventing press: None of it should be allowed to succeed. It shouldn't be allowed to be seen to succeed, either, or we will see more of it. It is not the most important reason to vote for Bush. But it would be a reason to savor his victory. **NR**

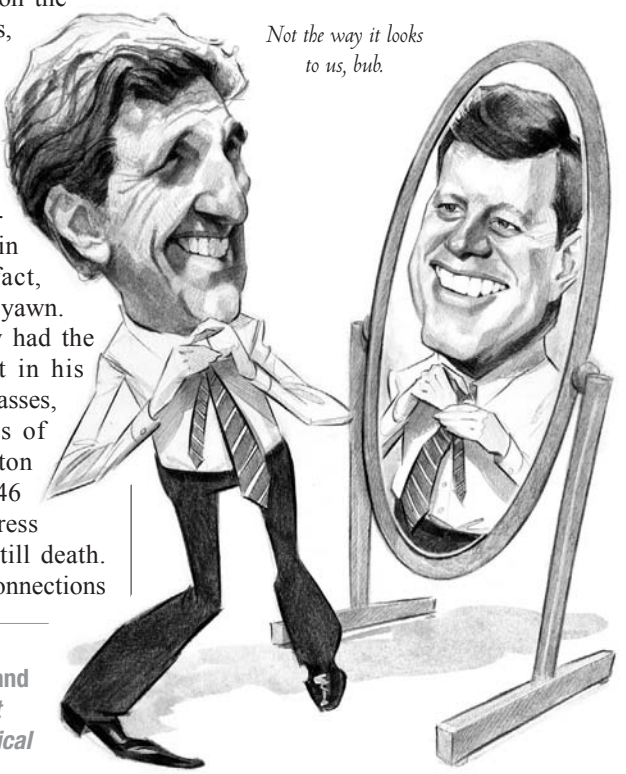
Two JFKs, Divisible

NOEMIE EMERY

I NEVER knew John Kennedy, and John Kennedy was not (sigh) a friend of mine, but among the legions of those who are no John Kennedy, John Forbes Kerry probably heads up the list. Their names are similar: their given name John; their mothers' maiden names beginning with "F"; their vaguely Irish-sounding surnames beginning and ending with the same letters. They came from Massachusetts; commanded small boats in wartime in Pacific and/or Asian waters; and had access to vast sums of money they did nothing whatever to earn. Past these, however, points of resemblance are thin on the ground. John Kennedy was one of four charismatic American presidents of the 20th century, with a capacity to charm, disarm, and inspire people, one by one, and in a mass audience—a communicator on a par with Ronald Reagan and both Roosevelts. Kerry, on the other hand, rambles, meanders, and puts people to sleep. In the words of Democratic policy guru Ben Affleck, he tends to "enervate" those who listen. Kennedy imparted energy; Kerry drains people of it. Women do not jump or scream in John Kerry's presence. In fact, they seem hard-pressed not to yawn.

All his life, John Kennedy had the ability to seduce and enlist in his interest people of all social classes, from the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire to the East Boston townies whom he met in 1946 when campaigning for Congress and who stayed in his orbit till death. Kerry has problems making connections with anyone; at least anyone not on the payroll. Kennedy's great charm was, according to most people who knew him, a quality of being more intense than most people, of wringing the most out of every experience. People in his company tended to feel more alive and exuberant. People near Kerry, on the other hand, tend to feel dead, or at least in a coma. This may be restful, but it fails to inspire. People nod off when he talks. Kennedy was adored by his Secret Service detail, perhaps even too much so. Kerry's detail has a different reaction. As the Washington Prowler reported on *The American Spectator*'s website, at least one agent asked to be reassigned after Kerry took him on a shopping trip involving the purchase of intimate items. On vacation in Idaho, Kerry threw a fit when knocked down by an agent trying to avoid other skiers. "I don't fall down. That son of a bitch ran into me," Kerry snapped at observers, who happened to notice his tumble. The real JFK did not swear at agents, or take them along to buy jockstraps. It's just "that special gracelessness," as Ben Bradlee might say.

Then there's the matter of money. Kennedy got his from his father, a buccaneer millionaire many times over,



Not the way it looks to us, bub.

DARREN GYGI

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to *The Weekly Standard* and author of the forthcoming *Great Expectations: The Lives of Political Sons.*

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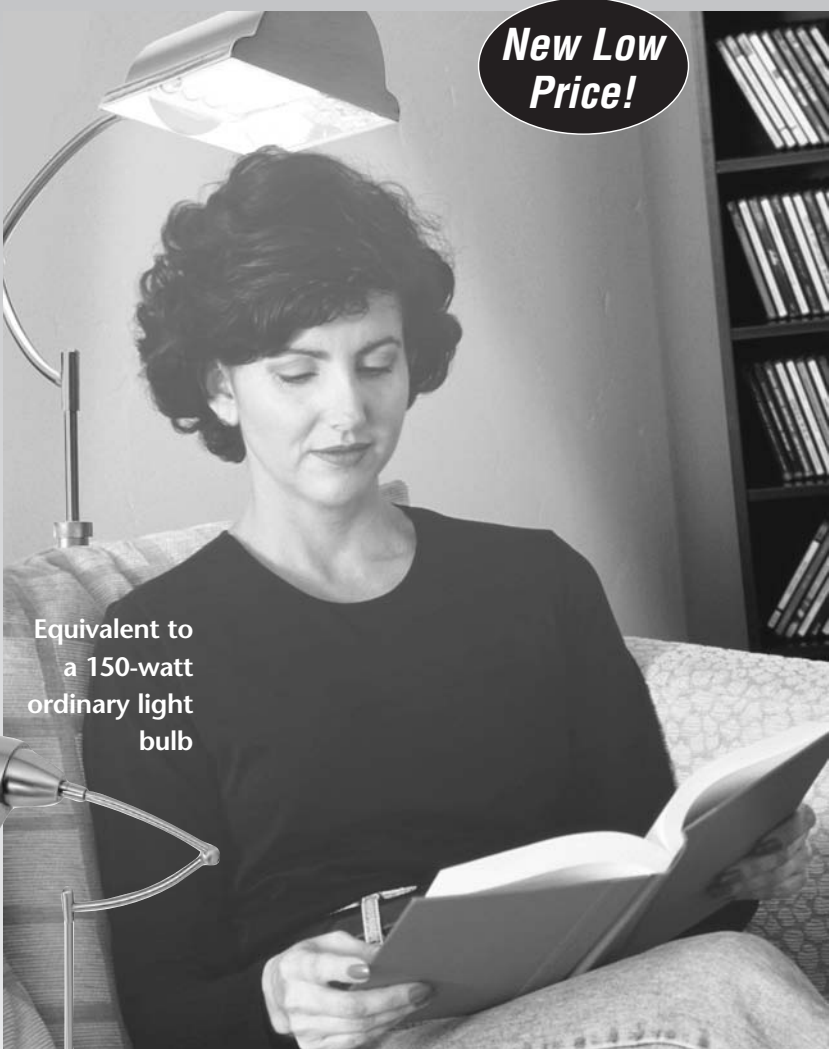

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whose largesse he shared with eight siblings. Kerry, on the other hand, married his, twice—first to a woman worth $300 million, then to a woman worth more than three times that. Kennedy, when he ran for president, had two nice but unremarkable houses—one on Cape Cod, another in Georgetown—the use of his father's estate at Palm Beach, his New York apartments, his father's small boat, and a small plane bought by his father when he began his campaign. Kerry has the same sort of stuff, but on steroids: a huge townhouse in Georgetown (as opposed to a small one) and four other mansions on other choice pieces of real estate, the total value of all of which is near $30 million. He has a boat worth over $800,000, and his wife's plane, the deluxe version of a Gulfstream jet, costs $35 million, making this man a really high-maintenance dude. Kennedy's wife spent his money (and boy, did she spend it), costing him no end of annoyance and even embarrassment. Kerry, by contrast, spends his wife's money, and spends it with a sense of eager entitlement never seen in the real JFK.

John Kennedy did not go in for exotic sports and expensive equipment; his favorite pastimes were golf and touch football. (His real favorite pastime was, of course, women, which did not cost him money. If it had, he might have been more restrained.) Throughout his public career of 17 years, Kennedy gave his government salary to various charities, and lived on his trust funds. Kerry has a different idea of what he ought to "give back" to society. Between his marriages, when he was forced to live on his own earnings, his annual donations to charity, on a salary over $100,000, ranged from $2,039 to 0, for an aggregate total of under .07 percent of his income. The best indication of where his priorities lie seems to be in his returns for the year 1993, when he reported an income of $130,345, bought himself an Italian motorbike for $8,600, and gave the wretched of the earth $175.

And then, of course, there is public life. The favorite construct of Democratic poseurs (such as Kerry) is to present themselves—in contrast to unsubtle Republicans—as cool, nuanced, and continental, like John Kennedy. But this ignores the fact that in the 1960 election Monsieur Nuance was not Kennedy, but Adlai Stevenson, the only-too-subtle liberal darling, adored by the type of people who now support Kerry because they can't stomach President Bush. In those days, of course, they could not stomach Kennedy either, whom they regarded as hopelessly brash and aggressive—too macho, too hard-line, too bellicose. (The one they really detested was kid brother Bobby, who was too religious, always moralizing, and prone to seeing everything in black and white.) Kennedy disliked Stevenson and thought him effeminate; a "girly-man," in Schwarzenegger argot. Unlike Kerry, the real JFK was not the most liberal senator, or even the fourth-most-liberal senator, but one of the most conservative in the whole field of Democrats, an anti-Communist and ardent Cold Warrior. He had spent part of his young manhood in Europe, watching his father make all the wrong choices, and he never forgot it. His first major speech after being elected to Congress in 1946 was an address in March 1947 defending the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, and criticizing the Munich Pact of 1938—which his father had favored—as a terrible error that illustrated the folly of attempts to appease an aggressor.

The real JFK was an American exceptionalist, who sometimes invoked God in discussing the national mission, and who saw American power as a beneficent force. He did not come home from war to call other servicemen criminals, or vote against every effort to pressure the Soviet Union, or call America's allies a coalition of the bought and the bribed. He did not vote for a measure, before voting against it; or vote for a war (claiming he didn't), and then vote against supporting the troops he had helped send into battle, because he feared pressure from a rival candidate. "For the most part, Mr. Kerry, who voted against the first Persian Gulf War, tailored his positions on this one to his presidential ambitions," says the editorial board of the *New York Times*, which would swallow ground glass if they thought it would help make Kerry president. John Kennedy had his flaws, but this was not one of them. John F. Kerry is no JFK. **NR**

The Prosperity Killer

STEPHEN MOORE

It's hard to remember the last time Wall Street was as repelled by a presidential candidate as it is by John Kerry. Many stock analysts are convinced that the mere threat of a Kerry presidency has caused equity values to slump in the past two months. "No one wants to make major investments in the wake of a presidential candidate whose economic agenda would substantially raise taxes on investment and thus substantially raise the cost of capital in America," says investment specialist Robert Grusky of New Mountain Capital.

What Grusky is referring to here is the Kerry-Edwards risk factor. Efficient markets trade ahead of anticipated policy developments. A new analysis by Eric Engen, an economist at the American Enterprise Institute, finds that over the past several months there has been an inverse relationship between Kerry's poll numbers and the direction of the S&P 500: "The evidence suggests that when Sen. Kerry's political fortunes rise, the stock market tanks."

What do investors find so repugnant about Kerry-Edwards? In the past, the stock market has not performed, on average, much differently in Democratic and Republican administrations. What seems to have the markets especially spooked about *this* Democratic ticket is that it has embraced what I call the three terrible T's: tariffs, taxes, and trial lawyers.

Let's start with tariffs. Veteran political analyst Jeffrey Bell of Capital City Partners notes that if Kerry were elected, he would be the first protectionist to occupy the White House since Republican

Mr. Moore is president of the Club for Growth and a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

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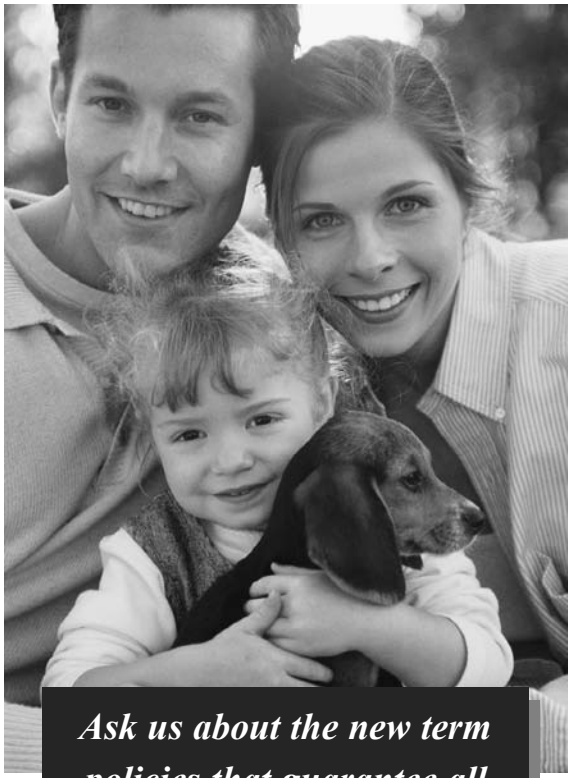

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Herbert Hoover, whose policies helped start the Great Depression. While he touts, to some pro-business audiences, his vote for NAFTA, he tells labor-union voters that he regrets that decision and would now vote against it. He recently lambasted U.S. trade representative Robert Zoellick as a traitor for negotiating free-trade agreements around the globe. As for Edwards, there is no ambiguity whatsoever: He is, and has always been, a devout protectionist. Earlier this year, he boasted that "I campaigned against NAFTA. . . . I voted against the Chilean trade agreement, against the Caribbean trade agreement, against the Singapore trade agreement, [and] against final passage of fast track for this president."

For Democrats, this is a distressing U-turn. The 1990s "New Democrats" promoted trade expansion, and Bill Clinton spoke wisely about the need for America to "compete, not retreat" in the arena of international competition. In contrast, Kerry insists that he would demand that draconian environmental standards and labor regulations—in reality, de facto trade walls that impoverish the developing nations they are supposed to benefit—be imposed on our trading partners. Protectionism, as economist Arthur Laffer points out, is historically a "prosperity killer." That's more true now than ever, given that about one-third of the growth of the U.S. economy today is in export markets.

A second prosperity killer is higher tax rates. Under a Kerry presidency, the capital-gains tax would rise from 15 percent to 20 percent; the dividend tax, from 15 percent to a high of 39.6 percent; and the top income-tax rate, from 35 percent to 40 percent. Kerry probably couldn't deflate the stock market any worse if he were doing it on purpose.

Then there is the issue of whether Kerry would be content with simply walloping the Bill Gateses of the world with higher taxes. He pledges that he would raise taxes only on those making more than $200,000 a year. (Reminder to middle-class voters: That's precisely what Bill Clinton promised a few months before he whacked everyone with a higher tax bill in 1993.) But Kerry's Senate history reveals that he has never shown the slightest reluctance to raise taxes on those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder to sustain big government. He has, over the past quarter-century, voted for higher taxes on more than 300 occasions, and once supported a 50-cent hike in the gas tax. If you have a job, drive a car, collect Social Security, or are married, it's a decent bet your taxes are going up if Kerry is elected.

One reason to suspect this is that there is no other conceivable way for Kerry-Edwards to finance their grandiose spending plans or to come within a Massachusetts mile of cutting the budget deficit in half, as the Democrats have promised. The Kerry economics team is fond of ridiculing the Bush administration for using "fuzzy numbers" to justify their tax cuts, but get a load of Kerry's mathematical deficiencies: The National Taxpayers Union finds that the Kerry wish list of new government programs would cost about $2 trillion over the next ten years. Where will the money come from? Not by soaking the rich. His plan to rescind the tax cuts for higher-income Americans would, according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, reduce the existing budget deficit by, at most, 10 percent. By my calculations, the Kerry tax plan to sock it to the wealthy, combined with his shopping list of new entitlement programs, will add at least $1 trillion to the national debt over the next ten years. So to the extent that the financial markets fret over massive deficit spending, Kerry's plan for restoring fiscal sanity is about as uninspiring as Bush's: They both flunk on this score.

If you have a job, drive a car, collect Social Security, or are married, it's a decent bet your taxes are going up if Kerry is elected.

Now what if Kerry pulled a Bill Clinton and proposed a massive broad-based tax hike to close the budget gap? The average family would be forced to pay about $8,000 in higher taxes over the next decade. That may be chump change for the super-affluent—people like the Heinz-Kerrys—but for "the other half of America" to whom Democrats are trying to appeal, it would be devastating.

Finally, there are the trial lawyers. Edwards is, of course, a multimillionaire trial lawyer himself, and one of the biggest recipients, ever, of campaign contributions from the trial bar; Kerry doesn't rank too far behind. This investment has paid off handsomely for the legal profession. Kerry and Edwards are so beholden to lawyers that they both once voted against any caps on legal fees in the tobacco-settlement cases, thus enabling several billionaire attorneys to walk off with fees of hundreds of thousands of dollars an hour—money that was supposed to be used to promote public health and reimburse people who got cancer from smoking.

More than any other profession, trial lawyers deter economic growth, slow innovation, and raise prices of almost every product we buy, from health care to jungle gyms. The Manhattan Institute, in its excellent report "Trial Lawyers Inc.," estimates that the net annual cost to Americans of frivolous lawsuits now approaches $500 billion. That is to say, Americans now pay the equivalent of a 5 percent trial-lawyer tax on every good and service they purchase. This is the greatest income transfer from the working class to the truly undeserving rich in the history of the Republic. Not surprisingly, this invasion of the trial lawyers cripples profitability and reduces shareholder value; the Kerry-Edwards umbilical cord to the trial-lawyer profession is a direct assault on the investor class—and another reason for Wall Street's hatred of Kerry.

And so we have an election that is shaping up to be a clash of two competing economic visions for America: the ownership society that George W. Bush embraces, and John Kerry's dream of a middle-class entitlement society. Bush recently announced in a major speech in Virginia that he seeks to expand broad-based ownership of assets in America, including stock ownership and home ownership, to all income groups. Most of his economic and tax policies have been designed to increase the value of assets: by cutting tax rates on capital, by promoting personalized ownership of Social Security payments, by calling for a vast expansion of IRAs, and by keeping interest rates low. As more and more

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Americans gain entrance to the ownership society, their dependence on government will theoretically subside; that quite understandably is a cause of serious trepidation to New Deal, welfare-state Democrats.

In stark contrast, John Kerry's program would—by design—vastly expand the dependency class in America through the creation of new welfare-style programs aimed at the vast middle class. Kerry craves a nationalized health-insurance program for all Americans, government-subsidized day-care programs, free or cut-rate drugs for seniors, and expanded college-tuition assistance for families. He would pay for all these programs by raising taxes on the very investor class that Republicans are trying to expand.

With some two-thirds of Americans owning their own homes and almost three out of five American households now owning stock, the key for Republicans to win in 2004 is to educate voters about the dangers of the Kerry-Edwards program to their personal economic security. Wall Street understands the bearish implications of a Kerry presidency, and the wealth-destroying effects of the terrible T's. The outcome of the election depends on whether the 120 million American shareholders do too. **NR**

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The 'Squeeze' Play

KEVIN A. HASSETT

IVORY-TOWER economists have a mathematical model for just about any occasion. They even have one—the "median voter" model—that predicts how successful politicians will compete to craft tax plans pandering to the middle class.

This pandering tendency does, however, present something of a challenge to politicians. If previous governments enacted policies that were designed to bring bliss to *homo medius,* then politically attractive changes to current policy become more difficult to devise, for there are fewer gifts left to give. The income tax today is a nice case in point. According to the latest numbers from the Congressional Budget Office, the top 20 percent of the population pays a whopping 82 percent of all income taxes, while the middle 20 percent pays only 5.2 percent. Lowering rates at the top might make everyone better off, but no politician has stepped forward and argued that 5.2 percent is too small a burden on the middle class.

Nevertheless, the latest rhetorical twist on the campaign trail is that there is a "middle-class squeeze." Sure, the economy has turned around, the story goes, but the poor guy in the middle is not seeing the benefit. A million new jobs have been created this year, but the jobs are "bad jobs with low wages." And what's worse, health-care costs are so high that folks in the middle just can't make ends meet. Other necessary expenditures are being postponed. What follows is that new *non-tax* policies, such as the $2 trillion in new social spending offered by Senator Kerry, are needed to rescue the middle class from all that trauma.

Mr. Hassett is director of economic policy at the American Enterprise Institute.

If there were a middle-class squeeze, it would be most helpful to political challengers, who could claim that incumbents paid too little attention to the middle class. But the notion of the squeeze is a stretch. As measured by GDP, the economy has now grown every year since 1991. It even grew three-quarters of a percentage point during 2001, the recession year. Before 1991, one has to go all the way back to 1982 to find another year when the economy shrank. If the economy on average is getting richer and richer, how exactly can the middle class be squeezed at the same time?

The latest squeezologists support their claims by alluding to a narrow set of facts. Most cite recent work by Jared Bernstein of the Economic Policy Institute that reports that the real (adjusted for inflation) income of the median family declined in the two most recent years for which we have data. Bernstein has also shown that real family incomes have increased over time, but much of the increase is attributable to second earners. The implication is that individuals, like runners on a treadmill, are working harder just to stay in place.

But these observations provide an incomplete view of the current welfare of the middle class. Bernstein's most recent numbers are for 2002. The economy has, however, accelerated significantly since then. For example, it grew 4.8 percentage points over the past twelve months, a growth rate that was not exceeded in any one-year period during President Clinton's two terms in office. Presumably, this healthy growth has led to improved welfare for the typical denizen of our economy.

More important, incomes vary across individuals for many reasons. Many retirees have high wealth but not a lot of current earnings. The welfare of such people is poorly approximated by their income. There are others who can expect to have high lifetime wages but experience transitory shocks in a recession. If they plan ahead, their standard of living might hold up nicely despite bad news.

Because of these and other factors, academic economists have moved toward a consensus that it is best to rely

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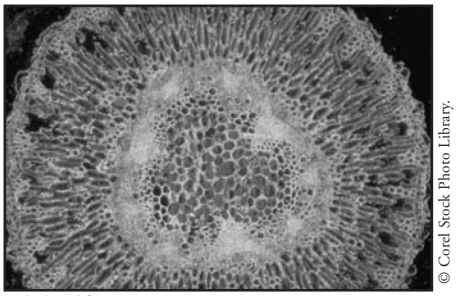

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on consumption rather than income when evaluating changes in welfare. If a retiree is wealthy, her income might be low but her consumption could be high. If a shock has temporarily made a high-income fellow look poor, his consumption might be more revealing of his true economic standing.

The government's Consumer Expenditure Survey provides the best picture of the recent evolution of middle-class consumption. The data tell a strikingly different story from the income data. Real consumption expenditures by the middle 20 percent of Americans increased about 2 percentage points from 2001 to 2002, the last two years for which we have data. Over a longer period they did even better. From 1984 to 2002, consumption of those in the middle increased by about 10 percent. That is hardly a squeeze.

What about the claim that health-care costs are crowding out other expenditures? That notion is also quite dubious. Excluding health-care spending, consumption grew from 1984 to 2002 by about 8 percent, only a fraction smaller than the overall gain.

The claims that *homo medius* is not sharing in the latest boom are also almost certainly false. The statistics are striking. Let's compare numbers for 2004 with those from 1996, the last year a president was seeking reelection. In 1996, about 5 million individuals reported that they were working part time for economic reasons. In 2004, the number is down to 4.3 million. In 1996, 65 percent of Americans owned a home. Today, 69 percent do. In 1996, 41 percent of Americans owned stock. Today, half do. The growth rate of real average hourly earnings over the past four years has been 3.3 percent. During Clinton's first term, the growth rate was negative 0.5 percent.

What about those high education costs? In 1996, average financial aid per student (in constant 2002 dollars) was $5,851. In 2004, it was $9,099. And that money is having an effect. In 1995, 62 percent of high-school graduates went on to college. In 2003, 64 percent did.

So the claims that things are getting worse for the middle class seem weak. Which leaves only one part of the squeeze theory unscathed: It may well be that much of the improved welfare of the middle class is attributable to the fact that married females have increased their participation in the labor force. It is difficult to support the view that providing women with employment opportunity worsens the welfare of the middle class. If individuals voluntarily depart the home and enter the labor force, they must be doing so because they believe their choice to be a satisfying one. Moreover, that choice provides many significant benefits. Chief among these is the underappreciated diversification of a household's labor income. If a family has two workers bringing home paychecks, it is much less likely that a recession will cause family income to drop perilously low. The Cleavers might have lost their home had Ward ever been fired. Today's two-earner couples are much better prepared for calamity. Today, June's income would help make ends meet until Ward found another job. Accordingly, households feel less compelled to stockpile resources as insurance against layoffs. This likely explains why consumption has held up so well—even in the bad years.

The variables that provide the best guide to voter behavior are broad measures of income, not distributional information.

The consumption data and the topline GDP numbers suggest that the middle class has been doing fine. This view is reinforced by studies of voting behavior. The leader in this field, Ray Field of Yale University, has found that broad measures of income—not distributional analysis—are the best predictors of election outcomes. If GDP is growing, voters are happy. In 1996, for instance, real GDP grew 3.7 percent, which was more than enough to overpower all of the negative middle-class statistics for President Clinton. Income has been booming lately, so votes should go to incumbents this election cycle. If income were shrinking, there might be a middle-class squeeze. It isn't—so there's no squeeze. NR

The Energy Mirage

JERRY TAYLOR AND PETER VAN DOREN

One of the few "big ideas" John Kerry has put forward is a sweeping federal program to secure energy independence. This idea is by no means new: It has been embraced to varying degrees by every major national politician for the past 30 years. But Kerry's constant focus on the issue suggests that he, unlike his predecessors, might actually be serious about it. If so, America would be in for a radical economic transformation; a review of his plan, however, suggests that Kerry is offering more hat than cattle.

Making do solely with domestic sources of energy would require either extreme cuts in energy consumption or major increases in domestic production, or both. Last year, America consumed 20.3 million barrels of oil a day (mbd) but produced only 5.6 mbd. Finding a way to cut out almost three-quarters of America's oil consumption won't be cheap or easy. Dramatic cutbacks in consumption would be expensive: Industry would be forced to replace the energy it uses with costlier inputs of labor and capital, and consumers would see drastic price increases. The Kerry camp, of course, is full of energy consultants and policy mavens who claim that we can do far more with less, and save money in the process, without any sacrifices. But the old adage that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is, certainly applies in this case.

The idea of increasing production

Mr. Taylor is the director of natural-resource studies at the Cato Institute. Mr. Van Doren is the editor of Cato's *Regulation* magazine.

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from conventional energy sources has obvious appeal, but it flies in the face of geological reality. If we stopped importing oil tomorrow, petroleum prices would soar to over $100 a barrel and gasoline prices would hit current European levels. Even were we to put oil rigs in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other areas currently off-limits to the industry, we would still be forced to get more than half of our petroleum from abroad to meet current demand. Accordingly, if we want more domestic energy, we'll have to get it mostly from unconventional sources. But alternatives to petroleum in the transportation sector (where most of that oil goes) are so costly that there's no way to avoid a major and sustained increase in fuel prices.

Energy independence, short of outright withdrawal from the global oil market, wouldn't insulate U.S. consumers from oil-price shocks: It costs little to transport oil, so a supply disruption anywhere in the world would increase the price for all remaining oil. Outright withdrawal, however, *would* turn America into an energy island immune from the effects of supply disruptions abroad—and that would be no small thing. Economists who have studied the price shocks that follow such disruptions have concluded that recessions naturally follow as well. Although oil purchases account for only 2 percent of U.S. GDP, major price shocks radically disturb demand in various sectors of the economy and trigger costly reallocations of capital and labor. Uncertainty about how high the prices might rise and how long the spike might last slows investment throughout the economy.

But while real energy independence would probably reduce the likelihood of oil shocks, it would do so at the cost of a dramatic one-time shift away from low energy prices—a shift that would have economic transition costs and, even when fully played out, impose a permanent drag on the economy in the form of higher overall prices.

Would this trade-off be worthwhile? It depends on how volatile you think the global oil market will be, and how high you think domestic prices might go without oil imports to buttress supply. Had a policy of enforced energy independence been in place for the past several decades, however, consumers would almost certainly have been worse off.

Which brings us back to Senator Kerry. Even if we embrace energy independence and judge that the trade-off is worth the price, there's little evidence to suggest that Kerry feels likewise: Nowhere in his speeches or his campaign material does he even *suggest* that trade-offs exist. His plan is a neon-lit free lunch, in pursuit of a goal even one of his own energy advisers (anonymously, of course) called "asinine" in the *New York Times* a few weeks ago.

The first element of Kerry's plan is to throw vast quantities of tax dollars at corporations that claim to be "*this close!*" to achieving a commercial breakthrough in just about any energy technology you can think of. For instance, President Bush wants to throw $1.7 billion at hydrogen-powered fuel cells; Kerry sees him and raises him $3.3 billion, for a total of $5 billion. Unfortunately, hydrogen will probably require just as much or more fossil fuel to produce as it displaces, which explains why virtually all environmental organizations rightly dismiss the hydrogen fad as an expensive distraction. Likewise, Bush offers $2.1 billion for "clean" coal research; Kerry sees him and raises him $7.9 billion, for a total of $10 billion—despite the fact that taxpayers have subsidized "clean" coal programs for 20 years now without a single commercially viable facility having ever been built using that technology.

If government subsidies could reliably turn ugly technological ducklings into beautiful economic swans, we'd all be driving around in 'Carter Cars' powered by synfuels.

If government subsidies could reliably turn ugly technological ducklings into beautiful economic swans, we'd all be driving around in "Carter Cars" powered by synfuels and buying electricity from fusion, solar, or wind power plants that would be almost too cheap to meter. Technologies with economic merit don't need government subsidies, and subsidies for technologies without economic merit won't do any good.

A second key element in Kerry's plan is a mandate for yet more ethanol consumption. Both he and Bush support requiring the production of 5 billion gallons of ethanol a year by 2012 despite serious questions about whether ethanol, too, might not consume more energy than it produces: If it's a net energy plus, it's not by much. The fact that escalating ethanol subsidies have done little to slow down America's increasing dependence on foreign oil continues to escape notice.

The third element of the Kerry plan is to increase the subsidies directly paid to producers and consumers of unconventional energy. For instance, Kerry proposes expanding tax credits for those who manufacture fuel-efficient cars and promises a whopping $4,000 federal check for anyone who buys them. When Arizona tried a similar program some years ago, it created a budgetary meltdown that almost bankrupted the state. So either the Kerry plan is a fiscal time bomb waiting to go off or it's so heavily qualified by fine print that it's not meant to be taken too seriously.

Fourth, Kerry seeks to tighten automobile fuel-efficiency standards, although exactly how much is something of a mystery. (While he is on record in support of a 50 percent increase in these standards, he has buried that initiative over the past several months.) Fuel-efficiency standards undeniably reduce the marginal cost of driving and thus increase travel (the economics literature suggests that for every 10 percent increase in fuel efficiency, people increase travel by 2 percent). But this, too, has undesirable consequences: One of them is increased congestion. Another is a net increase in air pollution. According to a recent study by Andrew Kleit at Pennsylvania State

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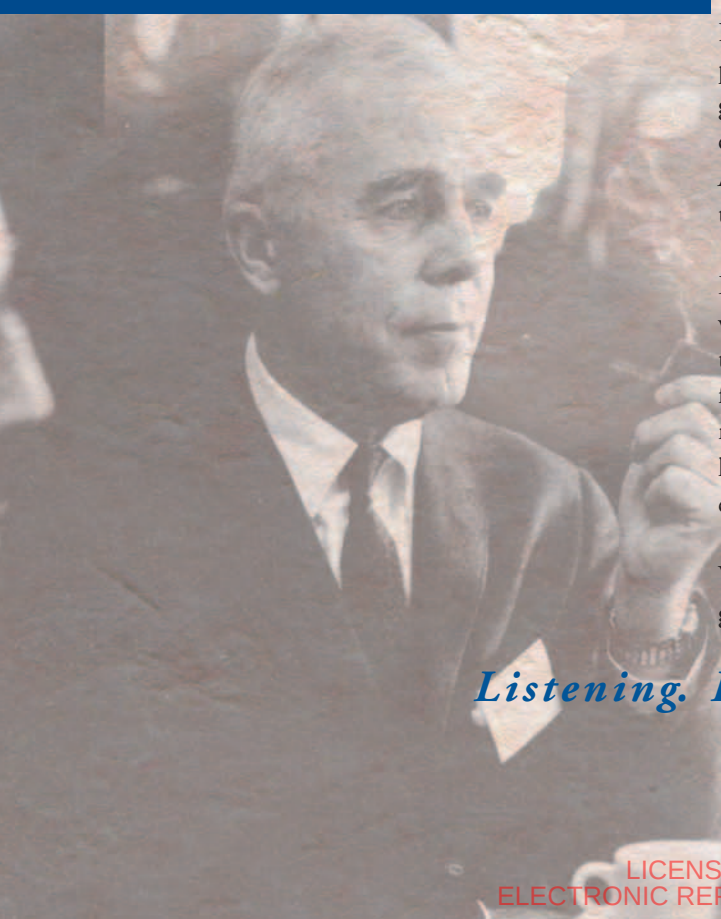

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University, a 50 percent increase in fuel-efficiency standards would increase net emissions of volatile organic compounds by 1.9 percent, nitrogen oxides by 3.4 percent, and carbon monoxide by 4.6 percent. So while tighter fuel-efficiency standards might make a significant dent in gasoline consumption (given enough time for the auto fleet to turn over), we're not sure it would be worth the cost.

There you have it: the Kerry plan for energy independence. It's highly unlikely that his program would even slow down America's increasing reliance on foreign oil, much less reverse it. The Kerry campaign has addressed energy matters beyond independence, but most of the offered initiatives are unremarkable. For instance, Kerry promises to "jawbone" OPEC to increase oil production, which is akin to promising to "jawbone" the checkout clerk to reduce grocery prices at the supermarket. The promise, moreover, conflicts with Kerry's declaration that, in his administration, America won't rely upon the economic good graces of Saudi oil sheiks. Well, just whom, then, does Senator Kerry plan to sweet-talk? If Bush's well-known friendship with the Saudi royal family can't shake out a bit more oil from the Middle East, what reason do we have to believe that Kerry's begging and pleading would be any more effective?

Kerry also promises to spend $10 billion in tax money to underwrite upgrades of old coal-fired power plants owned by utility companies. But why can't owners of those plants pay for such upgrades themselves—particularly given the regulatory advantages the plant owners have secured through the Clean Air Act? If President Bush ever promised such a thing, he'd be flayed alive by Democrats decrying Republican handouts to polluters.

In sum, Kerry's plan makes absolutely no sense as economics. It makes perfect sense, however, as politics. Important industries in swing states will certainly cheer much of it. There's nothing new here: just the same old slick handouts—dressed up as high-minded policy—that have characterized the energy plans of both parties for far too long. **NR**

The Missus

LUCIANNE GOLDBERG

When Teresa Heinz Kerry, as she is now known, first slipped into the public consciousness, we were titillated by the promise of unique copy to come. Here was an older, sophisticated woman, cushioned by enormous wealth and, we hoped, possessed of a grand personal style.

A tip-off to the potential for delicious indiscretion came from Lisa DePaulo's interview in *Elle* magazine. There Heinz Kerry blithely nattered on about a prenup with her second husband, her Botox injections, and how she would happily remove a husband's dangly bits if she caught him cheating. The interview caused a sensation. Reporters drooled at the possibility of future features and flashes. We pictured Kerry's staff calling out for cardiac paddles just to get through the primaries. Here at last was a flamboyant, carefree spirit who could not be tamed; this was going to be better than Martha Mitchell swilling Jack Daniel's on a 2 A.M. phone call. Teresa unplugged was going to be fun. But, as we have sadly come to see, not fun enough.

Teresa Heinz Kerry was a different kind of political wife. She had unfamiliar trappings: the certain ripeness of age, earthy good looks—a kind of throwaway chic, stomping around in sling-back Chanel heels and untucked $600 silk blouses. She also had wads and wads, stacks, piles, mountains of endless money. Money she apparently totally controlled. She had five houses, innumerable cars, presumably green-carded servants, and a private Gulfstream jet. After years of pastel Talbots shirts and Mao suits from lockstep female pols, we were ready for drag-a-sable high nonchalance. We were ready for Ava Gardner in a sarong followed by maracas-shaking cabana boys. Or perhaps—if she was African American, as she claimed early on—a bit of Josephine Baker bananas-and-purple-feathers glam.

We wanted the knowing wisecracks of an Eve Arden, and the toughness of a Margaret Thatcher. We expected—given her life among the rich, powerful, and secure—that accumulation of unembarrassed insolence known as "cool." We were hungry for the drama of a dying American species: the Grande Dame. We wanted someone with that kind of money to spend it on yards and yards of tulle and chiffon and to let them blow in the political winds.

But let's face it: The scarves were wool, and way too short. Teresa whinged when a Georgetown salon wanted an extra $60 to send someone to her house for a $30 manicure; she thereby missed a golden opportunity to go to the salon, over-tip everybody, order out for champagne, and be comped for life just for the publicity. The closest she came to a cutting put-down was a Teamsteresque "shove it" to a Pittsburgh reporter. The gunshot publicity from the comment drove her, a few nights later, to deliver probably the uncoolest political speech ever made: remarks before the Democratic convention that sounded like one long political suicide note.

After months of watching Teresa Kerry, it dawns on the observer that she is being suppressed. She is swallowing her inner Beatrice Lillie, and devolving into just another loopy rich lady who made the wrong decision about a man.

She was born Maria Teresa Thierstein Simoes-Ferreira in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique, East Africa. The product of convent schools, she was, from all reports, a devout Catholic and a daily communicant up through her college days in South Africa. Beautiful, smart, and from a good family, she graduated and left for interpreter school in Switzerland, where she met John Heinz, scion of one of America's greatest fortunes. On their first encounter, he told her his family was "in the soup business." (Sort of like John Kerry saying, "I was in the Navy.") She came to the States to marry him.

What a long, strange journey it has been since then: their wedding at the Heinz family's private chapel in Pittsburgh; a life of untold luxe; her years as a senator's wife; three children;

Lucianne Goldberg is publisher and executive editor of Lucianne.com News Forum.

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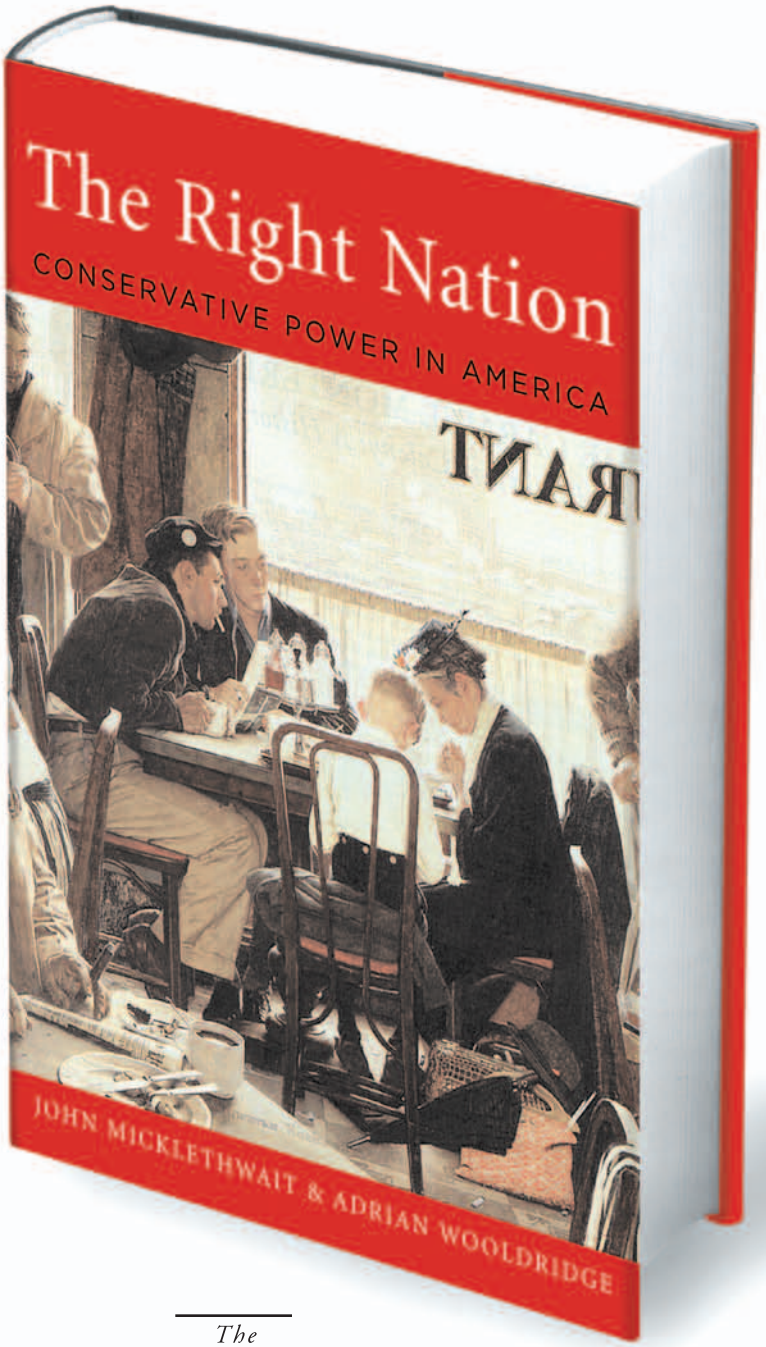

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Heinz's sudden death in a plane crash. There she was with three teenage sons and scads of money under her control. One senses that the decade Teresa spent as a single woman was lonely, and perhaps the strain of handling so much wealth made her vulnerable to a younger man's charms.

Then there is the very real chance that she actually fell in love with the gangly, self-centered junior senator from Massachusetts. She tried life as a senator's wife a second time. One gets the very distinct feeling that, however she saw her "golden" years playing out, the vision didn't include uneaten chili at Wendy's. We doubt that she ever truly pictured herself on a bus grinding through Kansas and Nebraska, listening to the same people she had been with for days say the same things over and over. She couldn't have imagined herself standing on sweltering platforms, sweating through her blazer, listening to her husband drone on for endless, sun-fried hours about Social Security and outsourcing. Can one blame her for finally snapping at the end of the first cross-country tour of the campaign—for demanding her own room and complaining that there had been no time to "just be"?

It may be that Buyer's Remorse has finally set in. Perhaps Teresa has grown weary of her upscale walker. And of his high price tag: There was that business of the $6 million loan, and those toys, like the $8,000 bike. Reporters who have interviewed Teresa say she has a pixyish sense of humor; sadly, despite her fortune, she's stuck with a man who seems to have none.

One night during the tour, she found herself on a platform with a mariachi band. Finally the madcap heiress we had been longing for kicked in. She grabbed a cute, young guy and started to dance. She was into some really good moves when her husband showed up, cut in, and couldn't even keep time to the music. She quit and walked off the stage.

BETTMANN/CORBIS

'We were ready for Ava Gardner in a sarong followed by maracas-shaking cabana boys.'

It may be that Teresa talked about herself at the Democratic convention because it was her only chance. She has invested her millions and the last really good ten years of her life in a man who can't shut up about himself, who lives in a fantasy world, and carries a little play hat—a souvenir from his Cambodian fantasy—in a "secret compartment" of his briefcase. He says it was given to him by a make-believe CIA operative in a country he's never been to, on a mission that couldn't have happened. Having to listen to that story more than once should send any girl who knows better (and Teresa most certainly does) running to *l'orangerie* to fluff the hydrangeas and wonder what she got herself into.

In her heart, Teresa may know that this will all be over soon. She can climb aboard her Gulfstream, nod to the uniformed steward for a flute of Dom Perignon, kick off her Chanels, and ponder what might have been. She might have provided so much fun for herself (and the rest of us) by being the Real Teresa—if only she hadn't had to defer to the handlers, the pollsters, the flacks, the pols, and one more senator in her life. She could have brought us just a taste of the Grande Dames of old—trailing Shalimar and cabana boys, making people dance to *her* tune, not someone else's—if she hadn't had that extra baggage to haul around. Maybe some day she can write a book about what it was like out there, tormented by all those people shaping her into something she was not—someone no one wanted to know, talk about, or quote. As things stand now, it's "shove it" and "four more years of hell" and "there's no time to just be." That's as wild and crazy as she's permitted herself to get. She could tell herself she tried: She really did. But there was someone else in the picture.

When Fay Wray died recently, stories quoted her saying that, though she'd been in around 80 movies, the only one people remembered was the one with the big monkey.

Teresa, take heed. **NR**

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The Nomination, Explained

ROB LONG

"Is there any way," we were once asked by a studio executive after he had read our latest script, "that you could show the main character doing something *incredibly* heroic and totally saving the day in a simple one-page scene we can slap on the top?"

We shook our heads.

"C'mon, guys," the exec said, "a simple one-pager. Boom, he does something heroic, everybody loves the guy, boom, back into the story."

We explained again that this was really impossible. It would seem fake, tacked on, and in the end wouldn't convince the audience that this guy was heroic in the least. And besides, this was a romantic comedy. It really wouldn't fit with the general tone.

The executive was insistent. "I need to know why I'm supposed to love this guy!" he cried. "I'm not asking for much, here. Make it a flashback or something. You know, somewhere in the first act the guy's walking around, suddenly he gets one of those—what do you call it—*episodes*, or whatever. He's reliving when he ran into the burning orphanage or whatever—you guys will come up with something *so much better*—and when he snaps out of it, we're all like, we *love* this guy. Love him. And after that, who cares what happens?"

I'm not sure where that executive is these days—he didn't last long at the studio—but from the way things are going, I suspect he's pretty high up in John Kerry's campaign.

Watching Kerry move around the country, pumping the air with awkward jabs, trying to connect to people by occasionally droppin' his g's, it's impossible not to imagine the minutes of a meeting of the Democratic party's brain trust:

> . . . Mr. McAuliffe reiterated the essence of the fall campaign: a simple one-pager, boom, we let everyone know he did something heroic, boom, they all love the guy, boom, he's elected. Messrs. Ickes and Rattner concurred. Mr. Devine added that by slapping a simple one-pager at the top of the first act, everything else that follows will be of little importance. All present agreed, and congratulated themselves on finding a candidate with war experience to head the fall ticket. The meeting was adjourned. Respectfully submitted, John Podesta, Secretary.

Let's assume, for the moment, that some portion of John Kerry's Vietnam exploits actually unfolded the way he says they did. No, let's be more generous: Let us stipulate that *all of it* happened just the way he describes. Whatever you say about the man after he returned from Vietnam—that he was a craven anti-war protester, an indifferent Massachusetts state electee, a nonentity senator—he went to Vietnam at a time when a lot of people his age didn't, and didn't have to. I missed being of draft age by roughly 20 years, but I'm pretty sure my response to receiving a draft notice would have been the same irrespective of my birth year: tears, a tantrum, and probably soiled underthings.

But Kerry went, and good for him. Why, then, does the whole affair—the medals, the convention moments, all of it—seem so cheap and desultory? The whole point of heroism, as we tried to explain to our studio-executive friend, is that it has to *lead* somewhere. Past heroic acts, in drama and in life, aren't supposed to be golden tickets to the Oval Office, a kind of thank-you-Senator-for-going-to-Nam. If they were, we'd all be enjoying the final year of the second Bob Dole administration. No, the trouble with courage, and the trouble with all virtues, really, is that they require continued maintenance, regular feedings of integrity and flinty originality. Acts of heroism, unfortunately, only whet the audience's appetite for more, for the big moment when the hero, deep into the

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third act, shows his mettle once again and tells it like it is.

Sort of like what John Kerry did, last year, during a Democratic primary debate. Asked to explain why he voted to authorize the war in Iraq, Kerry heroically gripped the podium, eyes blazing, and in the same clear voice that inspired and led the men he used to command, he answered: "If we hadn't voted the way we voted, we would not have been able to have a chance of going to the United Nations and stopping the president, in effect, who already had the votes and who was obviously asking serious questions about whether or not the Congress was going to be there to enforce the effort to create a threat."

Wassamatta, Charlie? Ya skeered?

Sometimes, when we're out of ideas, or stuck on a story problem, or looking for that last killer joke, writers will pitch anything just to break the silence. We'll all be sitting there, in the writers' room, staring into our afternoon lattes, and some brave soul will peep forth an idea.

"Okay, now, I mean, *not this*, but, what if . . ." And then the writer will proceed to suggest some bad punch line, or tired plot twist. You can't jump down his throat, because he's protected himself with the disclaimer *not this*—something *like* this, maybe, something *better* than this, definitely, just *not this*. Often, a *not this* pitch will restart the brain work and circuitously lead to something actually usable. But the truth is, sometimes *not this* is good enough, if it's late enough, and we're tired enough, and we're stumped enough.

John Kerry is the Democrats' *not this* candidate. Stumped and stuck on the Howard Dean problem, they took one look at his great hair and impressive back story and thought: *life raft*. But John Kerry isn't the opposite of Howard Dean. The opposite of Howard Dean is Joe Lieberman. The opposite of John Kerry is . . . well, in a lot of ways it's John Kerry, but the point is, John Kerry's Vietnam résumé helps the Democrats only if it's about justifying an anti-war position. (Thought experiment: Imagine Howard Dean with John Kerry's medals and résumé. Still think he would have lost Iowa?) As it is, Kerry's war experience hasn't led to any major difference with George Bush about Iraq—it has, though, led to some real differences with the large anti-war bloc of his own party. But they don't seem to care because he's, well, a war hero. He's a decorated veteran of a war they despised who now supports a war they despise but he's a war hero and he *might win* so please, please, just close your eyes and hope he turns out to be Clinton, okay? The Democrats made a rational choice when they picked Kerry, but Democrats don't do so well in the rational-choice department. Mondale was a rational choice. So was Dukakis.

Not this is right. **NR**

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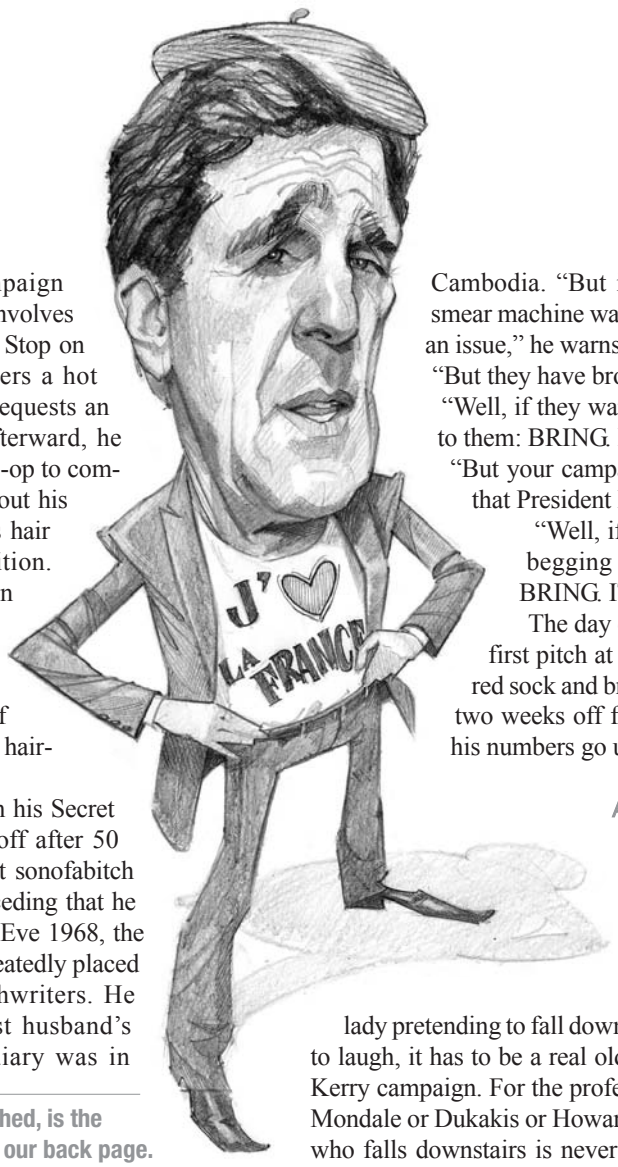
HIS ESSENTIAL Kerryness

MARK STEYN



DARREN GYGI

If I've been following the campaign correctly, the typical John Kerry day involves an early-morning visit to Bud's Truck Stop on Route 103 at which the senator orders a hot dog. Asked what he wants on it, he requests an aubergine and lemongrass coulis. Afterward, he heads to Idaho for a windsurfing photo-op to communicate his virility, after first flying out his stylist from Cristophe's to mousse his hair into its windswept and tousled position. Following questions from the press on the cost of his hairdresser, he first denies that he has a hairdresser and then, when her curling irons and rollers are pointed out in the back of his family's SUV, snaps, "She's not my hairdresser, she's the family's hairdresser."

Later, after a two-man luge run with his Secret Service agent ends with him falling off after 50 yards, he snarls, "I don't fall off. That sonofabitch agent arched his back too high." Conceding that he was never in Cambodia on Christmas Eve 1968, the senator says that those words were repeatedly placed in his mouth by overzealous speechwriters. He wasn't in Cambodia, his wife's first husband's corporation's wholly owned subsidiary was in Cambodia. "But if George W. Bush's Republican smear machine wants to make our service in Vietnam an issue," he warns, "I say to them: BRING. IT. ON!"

"But they have brought it on."

"Well, if they want to continue bringing it on, I say to them: BRING. IT. ON!"

"But your campaign has put out an ad demanding that President Bush call it off."

"Well, if he wants to make an issue of my begging him to call it off, I say to him: BRING. IT. ON."

The day ends with the senator throwing the first pitch at the Red Sox game. It lands on his red sock and breaks his toe, resulting in his taking two weeks off for surgery, in the course of which his numbers go up four points.

A PERFECT PARODY

If it weren't for the small matter of the war for civilization, I'd find it hard to resist a Kerry presidency. Groucho Marx once observed that an audience will laugh at an actress playing an old lady pretending to fall downstairs, but for a professional comic to laugh, it has to be a real old lady. That's how I feel about the Kerry campaign. For the professional political analyst, watching Mondale or Dukakis or Howard Dean stuck in the part of the guy who falls downstairs is never very satisfying: They're average,

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unexceptional fellows whom circumstances have conspired to transform into walking disasters. But Senator Kerry was made for the role: a vain thin-skinned droning blueblood with an indestructible sense of his own status but none at all of his own ridiculousness. If Karl Rove had labored for a decade to produce a walking parody of the contemporary Democratic party's remoteness, condescension, sense of entitlement, public evasiveness, and tortured relationship with military matters, he couldn't have improved on John F. Kerry.

This would be more than enough to see most of us through November: Why did John Kerry cross the road? "I crossed the road to volunteer for Vietnam. Some of us know something about what it means to cross the road." Who was that lady I saw you with last night? "That was no lady, that was my meal ticket." How many John Kerrys does it take to change a light bulb? At least four: One to approve the removal of the old light bulb; one to declare his courageous commitment to replacing the old bulb; one to vote against funding the new light bulb. And one to denounce George W. Bush and America's Benedict Arnold CEOs for leaving everyone in the dark.

It seems almost a shame to over-egg the Kerry pudding with the dark unsettling shadow of his war fantasies, the strange double inflation of his own exploits and of everyone else's "war crimes." Even then, the Swift Vets' campaign against Kerry's actions 35 years ago seems most effective in driving him to idiotic actions right now, such as his demand to his lawyers that they threaten action against bookstores carrying *Unfit for Command*. Fortunately for Kerry, most bookstore owners are too busy defending the "freedom to read the books you choose" against John Ashcroft's Patriot Act to take umbrage. But imagine if Bush were to threaten lawsuits over every book that was unpleasant about him: Every bookstore would be two-thirds empty and you could hunt buffalo on the plains of their floor space.

I underestimated Kerry because I made the mistake of seeing too much of him in 2003—in Woodsville, Plymouth, Littleton, and other obscure stops on the New Hampshire primary trail. He was awful. And he was just as awful in the huge auditorium at Nashua High School in late January as he'd been at the Barge Inn in Woodsville the previous summer. The only difference was that he was now awful with a full supporting cast—the "band of brothers," Max Cleland, Ted Kennedy, Patrick Kennedy, Jeanne Shaheen . . . When the chorus line momentarily parted and you got a glimpse of the candidate, he still seemed like a plodding single-digit fifth-place guy.

Primary season gives the party's electorate a chance to rattle the leading candidate and make him a better campaigner. This time around the leading candidates—Dean, Clark—rattled the electorate, and in their stampede to the fire exits they wound up sweeping the quintessential "None of the Above" man to victory. They made a very basic miscalculation: Howard Dean was a dull centrist governor pretending to be nuts, John Kerry is a nut passing himself off as a dull centrist.

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."

— Mark Twain

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PUBLIC DISSERVICE

Granting that many folks mistake self-importance for gravitas, it's surprising that the devious minds of the Democratic establishment, so fearful of Dean, failed to see the problems with Kerry. A serious party would have seen the War on Terror as a major foreign-policy challenge they needed to address credibly. But instead the Democrats looked at it from a shriveled, partisan, Carvillesque perspective as a Bush wedge issue they needed to neutralize. And so they bought into JFK's self-created myth of his four months in the Mekong as the most epic chapter in the history of the Republic, and here we all are mired in a Vietnam quagmire that feels like it's been going on longer than the real one.

The Democratic spinmeisters outspun themselves. If there's one lesson to be drawn from the 2002 elections, it's that biography is insufficient: The war-wounded Cleland, the widow Carnahan, the old lion Mondale all went down, because come Election Day losing three limbs or your husband or 49 states is not in itself a qualification for office, not in serious times. Two years ago, voters were very clear-sighted, and they rejected the TV-movie-of-the-week narratives, however appealing, in the absence of evidence that the candidates were credible on the issue that mattered.

> It's surprising that the devious minds of the Democratic establishment, so fearful of Dean, failed to see the problems with Kerry.

But in Kerry's case the party was so gripped by its Mekong syndrome that it overlooked how unappealing 99 percent of the biography was. The Senatitis—all the I-voted-for-it-before-I-voted-against-it stuff—is an inevitable consequence of spending more than half a term in the joint. But what could the Dems do? Once Gray Davis got into trouble, they'd hardly any governors left to run, apart from Jennifer Granholm in Michigan and Howard Dean in Vermont—and in the former case, she's Canadian, and in the latter, his state is (or might as well be). But even if you're stuck with running a senator, this one's a dud. Ted Kennedy, by comparison, has a formidable list of legislative accomplishments. Disastrous accomplishments, to be sure, but you can at least see the guy's been doing something. Kerry has nothing to show for his 20 years in Washington other than a lot of votes against things—and mainly against (if you're looking for a theme) the projection of American power in America's interest. More to the point, the sour oppositionism isn't grounded in any strategic clarity so much as his inability to get past Vietnam. His now famous 1986 Senate speech, with its attractively "seared" Currier & Ives scenes of Christmas in Cambodia, is typical: He was supposed to be addressing America's Latin American policy but the only part of his speech in which he sounds engaged is yet another self-aggrandizing stroll down the Ho Chi Minh Memory Trail.

Kennedy ran into trouble because he couldn't give an answer as to why he wanted to be president. Kerry's problem starts long before that: After 20 years, there seems to be no obvious answer as to why he wanted to be a senator. There's something to be said for the cynically conservative attitude that a legislator who doesn't produce any legislation is the least worst kind. But when a senator makes the focus of his legislative inertia America's national security, the Cold War, and missile defense, I'm not sure that theory isn't being stretched beyond its natural limits. When Kerry talks, as he often does, about his "35 years in public service," it's hard to see what service the public's gotten out of it.

JOHN KERRY, ROYAL CONSORT

These kinds of platitudes ring particularly empty from Senator Kerry. Americans do not begrudge a man making great wealth or inheriting it. But there is something vaguely icky about living the high life off the money of your wife's first husband, especially when you give off the air that the good things that flow therefrom—the private jets, the luxury vacation homes, the $8,000 bicycle—are essential to your sense of yourself. Bush is rich, but no one would have a home in Crawford, Texas, unless it really was his home: You don't go there for haute cuisine or the jet set. If you prefer a less partisan comparison, take Governor Dean, a Park Avenue blueblood who found love, happiness, and fulfillment in a materially modest life in Vermont. But Kerry's expensive tastes seem central to his identity. And his preferred formulation for detaching his policy positions from his lifestyle is especially feeble: "That's not my SUV, that's the family's SUV"—as if Teresa's his Halliburton and he just happens to be enjoying some windfall profits, which, come to think of it, seems pretty much the case.

Noemie Emery referred to Kerry as a "consort," and that's a good word for him. Watching him attempt to engage in regular-guy-type activities—eating a cheese-steak sandwich, talking sports, sipping a Coke—he reminds me of the Duchess of Gloucester making strained small talk with the lads in her capacity as Colonel-in-Chief of the Bermuda Regiment or the Royal New Zealand Army Education Corps. Even when she's doing her best—and that's more than John Kerry does on these occasions—you're aware that this is not Her Royal Highness's natural habitat. In that respect, Senator Kerry seems foreign to the rhythms of ordinary American life, and, unlike the Duchess, he's got no good excuse.

Yet it's the paradox at the heart of this most exquisitely refined and cultured of candidacies that none of the routine endurance tests of American vernacular politics—the New Hampshire primary pancake flip, etc.—is as crass, vulgar, or demeaning as the presidential campaign the senator designed for himself: the over-inflation of four months in the Mekong

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Delta into the sole rationale for the Kerry presidency. Watching John Kerry "reporting for duty" at the Democratic convention, I found myself pining for an unscheduled walk-on by Dr. Gilkes, P. G. Wodehouse's headmaster at Dulwich College in England. Gilkes, a Dumbledore-type figure of six-foot-six with a long white beard, was dedicated to keeping his boys from "getting above themselves." Wodehouse recalled his reaction to some triumph on the cricket field as follows:

"So you made a century against Tonbridge, did you, my boy? Well, always remember that you will soon be dead, and in any case, the bowling was probably rotten."

If only the Democrats had had some latter-day Gilkes figure to clip Kerry around the ear and tell him to stop being such a perishing puff after the first Vietnam retro road-show stop of this hollow vanity candidacy. How much pain the party would have been spared. How easily it could have avoided running Kerry-Edwards as a Bob Hope-Jill St. John ticket with all the faux sexual chemistry but none of the gags. In 1960, accepting the nomination in another perilous time, the prototype JFK—the one warming up the initials for the present colossus—never felt the need to mention PT-109, never mind base his entire candidacy on it, or reunite his crew to serve as warm-up act and campaign mascots. But 44 years on, today's Dems loved condescending to Kerry's "band of brothers" at that Boston convention. Never in the field of human conflict was so much made of so few by so many.

For a couple of years now, I've heard big-time Democrats say that "of course" they support our troops even though they oppose the war. I've never quite understood what that meant. But I think that's what most Dems saw in Kerry: They supported a soldier who opposed a war because he was the embodiment of their straddle. Alas, if you detach the heroism of a war from the morality of it, what's left but braggadocio? Anyone can latch on to that "band of brothers" line from *Henry V*, but you'd think a chap from a Swiss finishing school would be aware of the rest of the speech:

> Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
> And say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."
> Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day . . .

And even some he didn't do—gun-running to Cambodia, etc. As the English say, it's not cricket. I don't know whether, at any of the numerous elite educational establishments he attended, John Kerry ever played cricket. (For an American politician on the stump, he has a curious taste in sports: "I love baseball. I love football. I love sports. French skiers.") But this behavior is so unseemly, I'm confident that not only is it not cricket, it's not even French skiing.

There are two likely outcomes this November: Kerry will lose narrowly, and we'll be in for another four years of whining about how the world's biggest moron managed to steal a second election; or he'll lose decisively. The second option will be better for the long-term health of the Democratic party. The third option—a regally insulated president, Chiraquiste and Chiraquesque—is too grisly to think about. **NR**

In Vietnam

BYRON YORK

Last May, when the newly formed group Swift Boat Veterans for Truth first spoke to the press about John Kerry, the men—mostly Kerry's fellow officers from the four months he skippered a Navy Swift boat in Vietnam—seemed divided on the issue of Kerry's war record. Some questioned the medals he was awarded. Others had no desire to cast doubt on his service. But all agreed on one thing: that Kerry had betrayed them when, upon returning from Vietnam, he characterized the American military—and, by extension, the Swift boat veterans themselves—as having committed widespread atrocities in Southeast Asia.

That was then. After their opening news conference, the veterans—most of whom had not seen one another in 35 years—began talking among themselves about their memories of Kerry. They read Douglas Brinkley's hagiographic war biography, *Tour of Duty*, and found descriptions of events they didn't recognize. They compared notes. And their point of view changed. They came to question what Kerry had done, not just after leaving Vietnam, but while he was serving alongside them. In particular, they came to question some of the cornerstones of Kerry's Vietnam record, the engagements in which he won the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts. The result of that questioning was a book, *Unfit for Command*, written by the group's main spokesman, John O'Neill.

Going public was, in some ways, an audacious decision. Kerry has citations for his medals that commend, among other qualities, his "gallantry and intrepidity" in battle, along with his "extraordinary daring and personal courage" (to quote the citation from his Silver Star). How could O'Neill and the Swift boat veterans challenge that?

Head on. *Unfit for Command* charges, for example, that the Silver Star was "arranged to boost the morale" of Kerry's unit and was "based on false and incomplete information provided by Kerry himself." The Bronze Star was "a complete fraud." And two—perhaps even all three—of Kerry's Purple Hearts resulted from minor, accidental, "self-inflicted" wounds that did not merit recognition.

The Swift boat vets also challenged other aspects of Kerry's Vietnam history. They questioned his oft-repeated—and sometimes extravagantly detailed—accounts of spending Christmas 1968 in Cambodia, at a time when the U.S. government was denying there were any American forces in that country. And they focused an intense spotlight on Kerry's anti-war activities, in particular his testimony before Congress in 1971.

Unfit for Command, and a series of television ads made from it, have scored some direct hits. But O'Neill and the Swift boat veterans have also missed their mark on occasion, giving the Kerry campaign an opening to claim that everything they say is untrue. In the end, however, when all the claims and counterclaims are balanced against one another, it seems clear that the

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veterans, relying mostly on their own eyewitness experiences, have raised some valid—and serious—questions about John Kerry's four months in Vietnam.

CHRISTMAS IN CAMBODIA

Perhaps the most direct challenge the Swift boat vets have made to Kerry's credibility focuses on his account of spending December 24 and 25, 1968, on board his Swift boat, PCF-44, in Cambodia. It's a story Kerry has told many times. In a March 1986 Senate speech, he said that spending the holiday in Cambodia, under fire from Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge guerrillas, was "a memory which is seared—seared—in me."

In June 1992, Kerry said to the Associated Press, "We were told, 'Just go up there and do your patrol.' Everybody was over there [in Cambodia]. Nobody thought twice about it." He told the story again in September 1997 before a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. And in a June 2003 profile in the *Washington Post*, Kerry revealed that he kept an old camouflage hat—"my good luck hat"—which he said was "given to me by a CIA guy as we went in for a special mission in Cambodia."

But it appears there is no evidence that Kerry actually spent Christmas in Cambodia. Steven Gardner, who served on board Kerry's boat in December 1968, as well as part of January 1969, told NATIONAL REVIEW that at the time, in the area in which Kerry and his crew were operating, it was not possible to take a Swift boat to Cambodia. "It was physically, totally, categorically, across-the-board impossible to get into the canal that went to Cambodia with a Swift boat," Gardner says. "There were concrete pilings that were put in the water . . . plus, the Navy kept patrol boats there to make sure nobody went in."

Gardner, a member of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, is quite open about his opposition to Kerry. But Kerry's supporters aren't much help, either. James Wasser, who was also on Kerry's boat at the time, told the *Boston Globe* that he did not think the boat went into Cambodia, although it came "very, very close." Another pro-Kerry crewmate, Michael Medeiros, told the paper he didn't remember going into Cambodia with Kerry, either. In fact, none of the so-called "band of brothers" came forward to say that he had been with Kerry in Cambodia.

Faced with the evidence, the campaign began to backtrack. Spokesman Michael Meehan issued a statement saying Kerry had been "on patrol in the watery borders between Vietnam and Cambodia." Meehan also said that on one occasion Kerry "crossed into Cambodia at the request of members of a special-operations group." But the campaign did not produce evidence of Kerry's mission, and it seems beyond dispute that, even if Kerry can show that he crossed the border once, he certainly did not do so at Christmas 1968, as his dramatic accounts claimed.

THE FIRST PURPLE HEART

Another area in which the Swift boat veterans have raised fundamental questions concerns the first of Kerry's three Purple Hearts. On December 2, 1968, newly arrived in Vietnam, the future senator volunteered to undertake a nighttime mission on a small "skimmer" craft north of Cam Ranh. Kerry and the others in his boat saw a group of sampans being unloaded on the beach. They set off an illumination flare to get a better look. Something happened—it's not clear what, although there's no indication that anyone in the sampans opened fire—and Kerry began shooting. During the firing, "a stinging piece of heat socked into my arm and just seemed to burn like hell," according to Kerry's recollection in *Tour of Duty*.

A few hours later, upon his return, Kerry went to the medical facility at Cam Ranh Bay. "He told me that he had received small-arms fire from shore," Louis Letson, the Navy doctor who saw Kerry that day, told NATIONAL REVIEW. But Letson says Kerry's wound did not come from a bullet but was instead a bit of shrapnel of unknown origin.

"What I saw was a small piece of metal sticking very superficially in the skin of Kerry's arm," Letson recorded in a written account detailing his encounter with Kerry. "The metal fragment measured about 1 cm. in length and was about 2 or 3 mm in diameter." Letson said he used forceps to remove the piece of metal, which had penetrated no more than 3 or 4 mm into the skin. "It did not require probing to find it, did not require any anesthesia to remove it, and did not require any sutures to close the wound," Letson wrote. "The wound was covered with a bandaid."

Letson also said that at least one of Kerry's crewmates "confided that they did not receive any fire from shore, but that Kerry had fired a mortar round at close range to some rocks on shore. The crewman thought that the injury was caused by a fragment ricocheting from that mortar round when it struck the rocks. That seemed to fit the injury which I treated." (Letson told NATIONAL REVIEW that he remembered Kerry's case so well in part because "some of his crewmen related that Lt. Kerry had told them that he would be the next JFK from Massachusetts.")

When Letson first went public with his account, the Kerry campaign suggested that he had not been present at Cam Ranh Bay and was not even a medical doctor. In a letter threatening television-station managers who ran the first Swift boat ad, Kerry's lawyers wrote, "The 'doctor' who appears in the ad,

It seems clear that the veterans, relying mostly on their own eyewitness experiences, have raised some valid—and serious—questions about John Kerry's four months in Vietnam.

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Louis Letson, was *not* a crewmate of Senator Kerry's and was not the doctor who actually signed Senator Kerry's sick-call sheet. In fact, another physician actually signed Senator Kerry's sick-call sheet."

But it turned out Kerry's lawyers were wrong. The sheet was signed not by another doctor but by Letson's assistant, J. C. Carreon, who is no longer alive. And the sick-call sheet's description of Kerry's wound, while very brief, is entirely consistent with Letson's recollections. It reads, in full: "Shrapnel in left arm above elbow. Shrapnel removed and appl bacitracin dressing. Ret to Duty."

Beyond the question of the severity of Kerry's wound, or whether it came from enemy fire, the Swift boat vets raised the issue of whether it was an appropriate occasion for the awarding of a Purple Heart. That issue is important because this Purple Heart, along with the two others Kerry won later, allowed him to leave Vietnam before his normal tour of duty was finished.

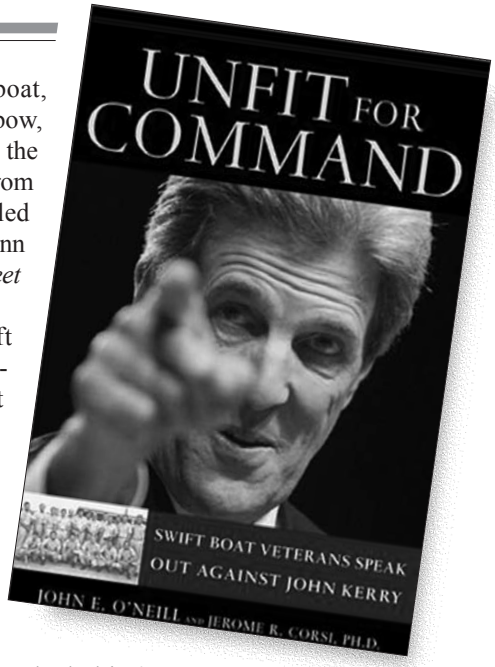
Not long after seeing Letson, Kerry went to his commanding officer, Grant Hibbard, to apply for the medal. "He had this little piece of shrapnel in his hand," Hibbard recalled in *Unfit for Command*. "It was tiny . . . I told Kerry to 'forget it.'" But some time later—Hibbard says he does not know how—Kerry was awarded the medal.

It's not clear how the approval procedures worked in this case, but the gap in time between Kerry's wound and the awarding of his Purple Heart seems to indicate that there was some sort of snag in the process. According to records released by the campaign, Kerry was formally awarded the Purple Heart on February 28, 1969—88 days after he was originally wounded. In the case of his second Purple Heart, Kerry was wounded on February 20, 1969, and was formally awarded the medal on March 5—a processing period of 13 days. For the third, Kerry was wounded on March 13, 1969, and was formally awarded the medal on April 17—a span of 35 days.

The dates come from the citations for each medal, which Kerry has posted on his campaign website. There is likely more paperwork involving the Purple Hearts in Kerry's records, and some of it might shed more light on what happened, and perhaps on why the first Purple Heart took longer to approve, but so far Kerry has not authorized public release of the records.

THE RASSMANN INCIDENT

No event plays a larger role in Kerry's Vietnam epic than the March 13, 1969, engagement in which Kerry pulled Army Green Beret Jim Rassmann from the Bay Hap River. Rassmann, who has become an active surrogate speaker for Kerry on the campaign trail, says that he was on board Kerry's boat that day, in a group of five Swift boats, when one of them, PCF-3, was rocked by a mine explosion. After that, Rassmann says, the entire group of boats came under heavy fire from both shores of the river. Then, according to Rassmann, there was another explosion, this one near Kerry's boat, which threw Rassmann overboard. Rassmann dove underwater to avoid both the gunfire and the propellers of the Swift boats; when he came up for air, he says, all the boats had left. But there was still shooting. With bullets whizzing around him, Rassmann dove again, and again. Then he saw Kerry's boat coming back to get him. "John, already wounded by the explosion that threw me off his boat, came out onto the bow, exposing himself to the fire directed at us from the jungle, and pulled me aboard," Rassmann wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*.



When the Swift boat veterans got together to talk about the incident, they found they had very different memories. Jack Chenoweth and Larry Thurlow, who were young lieutenants in command of the two boats immediately behind PCF-3, found that while they recalled the first mine explosion very well, they did not remember any second explosion at all. And they did not remember any gunfire coming at their boats from the banks. "There was no hostile fire," Chenoweth told National Review. "The only thing that happened that day was the mine."

What they did remember was that, immediately after the explosion, their boats began firing at the banks. That was standard procedure; when the mine went off about 20 yards in front of them, their first assumption was that it was the beginning of an attack from the banks. So the lieutenants ordered their men to begin firing at the banks to stop any assault before it started.

"I just started hosing down the beach area with about 300 or 400 rounds of ammunition," Van Odell, the gunner's mate on Chenoweth's boat, told National Review. "I was firing in bursts. I stopped, and there was no tracer fire coming in, no buzzing around my head, no bullets hitting our boat."

With no hostile fire coming in, Chenoweth, Thurlow, and Odell say they stopped shooting and concentrated their efforts on helping the wounded men aboard PCF-3. All three remember that after the explosion, Kerry's boat, PCF-94, moved away from the scene. It is not clear to them whether Rassmann ended up in the water as a result of Kerry's boat's accelerating or for some other reason. In any event, Chenoweth says he was about to pick up Rassmann—was just a few yards away from him—when Kerry returned and pulled Rassmann out of the water.

The medal citations for Kerry and for Thurlow (who, like Kerry, won a Bronze Star for his actions that day) say that everyone was working under enemy small-arms and automatic-weapons fire. But the Swift boat veterans have raised at least some doubt about that. For example, in addition to their personal recollections, they say that there were no bullet holes in the boats, indicating a lack of hostile fire. While that is not entirely accurate—records indicate that there were three bullet holes in Thurlow's boat, at least one of which he attributes to an earlier engagement—it does suggest that the boats were not significantly shot up in the incident. Compare that with another ambush, shortly before Kerry took command of PCF-94, in which the boat was riddled with about 100 bullets.

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In the end, no one disputes that Kerry did in fact pick up Rassmann. And it's possible that some of the differences in the stories can be attributed to the fog of war. For example, by all accounts, there was chaos after the mine went off under PCF-3. Somehow Rassmann fell into the water. At the same time, he heard heavy gunfire. From his perspective, it might have been reasonable to believe there was a firefight going on. On the other hand, perhaps it is possible that the Swift boats did actually receive some light fire from the bank during the time they were "hosing down" the area, although no one was hit.

In any case, the Swift boat veterans' account of the Rassmann incident casts Kerry's actions in a somewhat less heroic light than, say, the legend-building presentation at the Democratic convention. But it is simply not an open-and-shut case on either side, and, barring some future revelation that could change the story entirely, it seems likely that it will remain in dispute.

THE SILVER STAR AND MORE PURPLE HEARTS

When first faced with the Swift boat veterans' accusations, the Kerry campaign lashed out in what proved to be a vain attempt to stop the controversy before it started. They claimed, for example, that none of the Swift boat group had served with John Kerry. "Not one of those people served on the boat," spokesman Meehan told NATIONAL REVIEW. "They're not fellow officers. They weren't on Kerry's boat." The Swift boat vets no more served with John Kerry, Meehan explained, than anybody else who might have been in the Navy hundreds of miles away. "There were a lot of people in the United States military from 1966 to 1970," he said.

That didn't work. Of course the Swift boat veterans served with Kerry. They went out on operations with him—both the actions in which Kerry received the Silver Star and the Bronze Star involved more than one Swift boat. They bunked with him (and Steven Gardner did, in fact, serve on Kerry's boat). They were there, and, regardless of what one might think about their views, they have more than sufficient standing to talk about John Kerry.

On the other hand, some of their criticism of Kerry has fallen short. They suggest, for example, that Kerry's second Purple Heart was, like the first, accidentally self-inflicted. It happened on February 20, 1969, when Kerry was on a mission in the Cua Lon River: Suddenly, the boat was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, and Kerry suffered a shrapnel wound in his left leg. One member of the Swift boat veterans was on another boat during that mission and suggests there was no hostile fire, but there appears to be no reasonable scenario under which Kerry's wound could have been self-inflicted. And there *is* evidence that Kerry's wound, while not serious enough to keep him away from duty, was more substantial than the wound for which he was awarded his first Purple Heart.

The Swift boat vets also criticize Kerry's third Purple Heart, the one awarded after the Rassmann incident. Kerry suffered two wounds that day, one a shrapnel wound to the buttocks and another an injury to his arm. Both *Tour of Duty* and the Swift boat veterans' accounts say that Kerry was hit by shrapnel when he dropped a grenade in a bin of rice, an action that was part of a general policy to deplete supplies for the Viet Cong. "I got a piece of small grenade in my ass from one of the rice-bin explosions," Kerry said in *Tour of Duty*. Later in the day, during the Rassmann incident, Kerry is said to have hurt his arm in the (disputed) explosion near his boat after the mining of PCF-3. While the rice-bin wound seems clearly accidental, there also seems no doubt that any injury Kerry suffered in the wake of the mining was the result of a hostile enemy action.

Perhaps the weakest case made by the Swift boat vets concerns the action in which Kerry won the Silver Star. That occurred on February 28, 1969, when Kerry famously beached his Swift boat, jumped onto land, and chased and killed a Viet Cong guerrilla who had fired a rocket at the boat. The Swift boat veterans suggest that Kerry's action was not only not heroic, but reckless and dangerous. They also suggest that the guerrilla was a teenager, clad only in a loincloth, who was fleeing when Kerry killed him. And they suggest that there was some sort of official interference in the awarding of the medal that resulted in the Silver Star's being awarded with suspicious haste.

The Swift boat veterans' account of the Rassmann incident casts Kerry's actions in a somewhat less heroic light than, say, the legend-building presentation at the Democratic convention.

But officials considered the recklessness of Kerry's actions when they awarded him the medal—something that commanding officer George Elliott, now a member of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, has said on a number of occasions. On the lone-guerrilla issue, crewmates who were there at the time have recollections that conflict with the version of the story in *Unfit for Command*. "Number one, it was a man," Fred Short, who was on board Kerry's boat and now supports Kerry's candidacy, told NATIONAL REVIEW. "And if it was just one guy, he was real good, 'cause he fired about four or five rocket-propelled grenades at once." That testimony is supported by the account of William Rood, who commanded the other Swift boat in the action and believes there were other guerrillas firing at the Americans. And unlike the Rassmann incident, the Swift boat vets have not been able to produce eyewitnesses to challenge that version of events. As for the haste with which the medal was awarded, it is simply not clear what happened—perhaps more could be learned from the records that Kerry has not yet released.

Finally, the Swift boat veterans are caught in a difficult argu-

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ment over the Silver Star. They say they are not condemning Kerry's killing of the young guerrilla, only the fact that he received such a prestigious decoration for it. But in *Unfit for Command*, O'Neill writes that Elliott, when he approved the medal, did not realize that Kerry "was facing a single, wounded young Viet Cong fleeing in a loincloth," which suggests that Kerry acted improperly.

But imagine reading an account today of a young U.S. Army officer, patrolling the outskirts of Baghdad, who comes under attack from an insurgent with a rocket launcher. The officer orders his men to pursue the shooter—and takes the lead in the pursuit. He finds and kills the insurgent, who is still carrying the rocket launcher. Since the insurgent had already fired on U.S. troops, and since the insurgent was still armed, how many Americans would question the officer's conduct? Probably not many (and, in one of the many ironies of this case, the people angered by the incident would likely be Kerry supporters).

THE UNSPOKEN CODE

Bill Shumadine remembers John Kerry well. From June 1968 until June 1969, Shumadine was a young Navy lieutenant in command of a Swift boat in Kerry's unit. Kerry often kept to himself, Shumadine told NATIONAL REVIEW, but at times, he opened up, talking about his ambitions and his political role model, John F. Kennedy.

"We'd be sitting around and he'd talk about his destiny," Shumadine says. "He was telling us, 'I've got the same initials as JFK, I went to an Ivy League college, we're both from the same region, he got his start in public by being a hero on a small craft . . . .'" Kerry seemed especially interested in winning medals, Shumadine remembers. At times Shumadine and some of the other Swift boat lieutenants believed that Kerry was in Vietnam, at least in part, "to get his medals and get out of there."

Now, 35 years later, Shumadine is part of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. And what seems clear from all the questions that he and his colleagues have raised is that Kerry did more than perhaps exaggerate aspects of his Vietnam service. Rather, Kerry—an exceedingly ambitious young man with a penchant for self-promotion—violated an unspoken code by which the Swift boat sailors operated. Under that code—the code of can-do military men—you're not supposed to make movies of yourself, as Kerry did, to illustrate your heroism. (Even a fellow veteran on Kerry's side, Thomas Vallely, once told the *Boston Globe* that "John was thinking Camelot when he shot that film, absolutely.") Under the code, you're not supposed to exaggerate your actions in after-action write-ups, as the Swift boat veterans believe Kerry did, or to leave your command early, as Kerry also did. And under the code, you are not supposed to apply for a Purple Heart for a wound that required a dab of bacitracin and a Band-Aid.

Of course, Kerry was entitled, under the military's regulations, to ask for that Purple Heart. And he didn't give himself the other medals, either; the Navy approved each one. But the way he operated, taking advantage of the full measure of the rules to compile a politically appealing résumé, diminished some of those accomplishments, at least in the eyes of many of his fellow Swift boat sailors. They didn't like it then, and they don't like it now. **NR**

A Futile Foreign Policy

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

JOHN KERRY is worried about his record of support for gay unions, abortion-on-demand, and other hot-button liberal causes that rile moderate swing voters outside of New England. One way to counteract the image of an out-of-touch Boston liberal is to sound hawkish on foreign policy: If Vietnam was once something to be tapped for proof of a young Kerry's opposition to the corporate military-industrial complex, it is now even more richly re-mined in his gray years for evidence of military valor, toughness, and hyper-patriotism.

The slogans "Just as tough, but smarter," and "Respected, not just feared" now summarize the Kerry-Edwards party line on foreign policy. With those flippant phrases, a Jamie Rubin, Sandy Berger, Rand Beers, Joe Biden, or Joe Wilson can promise new style, same substance. In light of an amazing military victory in Iraq, followed by a difficult occupation, Kerry's most recent statements suggest that he would not necessarily have done anything different from what President Bush did in invading Afghanistan and Iraq, but instead would have "reached out to" and "sat down with" allies; such an embrace of multilateralism, we are assured, would have avoided a "unilateral," "preemptive," and costly American enterprise. Kerry's Iraq—it is presupposed that someone else mysteriously would have first removed Saddam—would purportedly now have involved a multinational effort, aimed more cautiously at order and stability rather than at unworkably radical democratic transformation.

MAN OF INDECISION

To the degree that there is any consistency in Kerry's evolving positions about the use of force, there seem at least two constants: partisanship and expediency. Thus Republican administrations' efforts to remove Saddam in 1991, and rebuild Iraq in 2003, prompted Kerry's initial opposition and subsequent support, depending on the pulse of the battlefield—yes to war, if victory looks assured and cheap; no, if it is in doubt or its consequences turn messy. Thus Bill Clinton's five air campaigns against Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Kosovo, and Sudan—often without congressional or United Nations sanction—earned not Kerry's principled opposition to unilateralism, but his partisan approval, especially since Americans

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were bombing without being much shot at. That almost a decade later U.S. soldiers still patrol the Balkans or that neither the Taliban nor Saddam was much bothered by cruise missiles is not a problem.

Perhaps a better barometer of Kerry's views about American power is his past opposition to strategic military expenditures that emphasized deterrence—the B-1 and B-2 bombers, the deployment of Pershing missiles in Europe, and the Strategic Defense Initiative. Not the use of force, but U.N. resolutions, sanctions, and protocols—coupled with multipolar, American-led diplomacy—should solve critical problems. This theme was emphasized by Kerry's own father in his book, *The Star-Spangled Mirror*. "Americans," Richard Kerry warned presciently of George W. Bush, "are inclined to see the world and foreign affairs in black and white." We are guilty as a people of "ethnocentric accommodation—everyone ought to be like us." The elder Kerry went on to counsel about the "fatal error" of "propagating democracy"—an idealism that made us stupidly captivated by "the siren's song of promoting human rights."

Previews of John Kerry's proposed foreign policy also seem reactive, if not parasitic upon George Bush's prior initiatives: His carrot of softer talk seems reasonable now only because someone else wielded the stick first. Kerry talks, for example, of a lack of renewed American engagement in the Middle East, but he cannot specify whether Clinton's Oslo initiatives were wiser than Bush's support for Ariel Sharon's unilateral efforts to leave Gaza, dismantle Hamas, and erect a fence. Was it cowboyish, as the Europeans allege, to isolate Arafat? If so, should we jump-start the peace process by bringing him back on board? Yes, no, maybe?

Kerry's overall approach to contemporary Iraq, Israel, our other allies, and the world at large is best summarized as something like, "I would not have done it; but since Bush did it, I wouldn't overturn it now." Thus Kerry welcomes Libya's bid to rejoin civilization. He acknowledges that Pakistan is now more friendly than hostile, with its nuclear dispensary shut down. It is salutary that Saudi Arabia at last is confronting its homegrown terrorists. Yet would Kerry have initiated any of the much-slurred efforts that helped to effect these changes—the removal of the Taliban and Saddam, tough talk with Pakistan's Musharraf, renewed vigilance over Iran's and North Korea's nuclear arsenals, and withdrawal of troops from Saudi Arabia? Would reliance, instead, on U.N. resolutions have made an impression on Mullah Omar, the Hussein dynasty, Muammar Qaddafi, or the Saudi royal family? Kerry seems to think so: During his senatorial career, he was always a strong advocate for dialoguing with the Vietnamese, North Koreans, Cubans, and Iranian mullahs.

Kerry flinches at the post-Cold War dichotomy of Old Europe vs. New Europe; so will he restore all those troops now being unilaterally withdrawn from Germany? France, we are told, has been unnecessarily alienated by President Bush; so will Kerry apologize—or will he learn that for the first time in decades the French are truly worried about American fury, giving the next president more, not less, leverage with French leaders?

Kerry's positions on North Korea and Iran also depend on antecedent Bush strengths. Kerry dispenses a lot of Richard Holbrooke-Sandy Berger tough talk, but offers nothing concrete about what he would do differently—or any appreciation that both messes inherited from the Clinton administration are being addressed by a tougher Bush determination to end appeasement. By the same token, Kerry talks about modernizing and reorganizing the U.S. military—even as he is relentless in his castigation of Donald Rumsfeld as a failed secretary of defense. Does he have any appreciation that Rumsfeld earned criticism precisely because three years ago he began implementing the very reforms that Kerry is now pirating and adopting as his own?

There is a déjà vu about the entire Kerry talk of ushering in supposed calm after the raging storm. Jimmy Carter, in reaction to the Nixon-Ford Vietnam era, assured the world of a new multilateralism without an inordinate fear of Communism—and thus helped to prompt Communist aggression in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, and Central America, as well as the Iranian embassy takeover. We talk of the Kerry half-measure and flip-flop, but such hesitation is simply updated Carterism—redolent of the occasions on which Carter sold F-15s to Saudi Arabia but ensured that they were not capable of bearing arms; wrecked the Olympics in lieu of confronting the Soviets in Afghanistan; and shuttled a dying Shah of Iran from one embarrassed foreign host to another.

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR STRENGTH

Many who now praise Ronald Reagan forget that 1980s Hollywood was convinced he would deliver us a nuclear winter; he was a proto-George W. Bush who was willing to go it alone, if need be, to stop Soviet aggrandizement. Thanks to Reagan and the senior Bush, however, Bill Clinton was freed from having to deal with things like an aggressive Soviet empire, tactical nuclear missiles threatening Europe, Grenada, Panama, and Gulf War I. In contrast, Clinton's commitment to "engagement," coupled with launches of cruise missiles, did not deter terrorists from bombing the World Trade Center or attacking Americans in Saudi Arabia, Africa, and Yemen. The thugs in Somalia were not appeased by Clinton's decision to withhold tanks from our troops, lest such armor "escalate" the situation. Haitians were singularly unimpressed when our troops seemed, and then sort of seemed not, to land on their shores. Bill Clinton's only foreign-policy success was a repudiation of U.N. and EU nonchalance about genocide in the Balkans, when at last he unleashed the U.S. Air Force to put an end to the killing.

So what would John Kerry's foreign policy look like? In the first few months, things would be little different from what we see now, as the Democrats could triangulate on prior Bush resoluteness in the same way Clinton profited from Reagan-Bush strength on the Cold War, Kuwait, and Panama. During this honeymoon, Kerry would reassure the Europeans with comfortable platitudes, and Kofi Annan might bask in overt American praise for the U.N. The War on Terror would be recast as not really a war at all: The proper tactic would be better police work to indict and jail miscreants, while providing more material aid to deal with the "root causes" of despair in the Arab world—pathologies that are best addressed not by radical and painful efforts to embrace democracy, but by sending money and diplomats abroad to appease status-quo autocracies.

But within a year or two, the terrorists, the vacillating Europeans, the Iranians, the North Koreans, and the Chinese

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would all take their measure of John Kerry. When Clinton, in his second inaugural address, characterized America as "the world's indispensable nation," Kerry asked: "Why are we adopting such an arrogant, obnoxious tone?" And he once remarked that his father had taught him "the benefit of learning how to look at other countries and their problems and their hopes and challenges through their eyes, to a certain degree, at least in trying to understand them." China, Iran, Cuba, Syria, and North Korea would all agree.

Kerry is thus both a European realist, who believes force has little utility in a complex postmodern world, and a multicultural diplomat who would not prejudge other nations as "bad" when they are merely "different"; or, as Jamie Rubin put it recently, a Kerry foreign policy would mean "an appreciation for other cultures and values. The bullying of the Bush administration will come to an end." No more tough "Axis of Evil" talk to Kim Jong Il or Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, but rather greater understanding of the *problématique* of totalitarian culture or the paradoxical role of theocracy in the modern world.

Once friends and enemies alike understood this return of Carter-Clintonism to American foreign policy, they would learn to ignore the do-gooder nagging and whining and do pretty much what they wished. They could rightly expect another Warren Christopher cooling his heels for hours on the Syrian tarmac, promises of resumption of food and oil for Korean Stalinists, or more cash and weapons sent to a rehabilitated Arafat's Palestinian Authority—all dressed up as "collective solutions," "U.N.-sponsored initiatives" within a "multilateral framework." Once more, Jamie Rubin assures us that we can provide Iran with properly sanitized nuclear fuel, which might just do the trick of shutting down their plutonium factories in the fashion that once worked in North Korea. After all, we all know that one of the world's greatest oil exporters that burns off its natural gas at the wellhead is spending billions of dollars for reactors simply to ensure sufficient supplies of domestic electricity.

If Kerry's foreign policy could well be disastrous for the United States in the long run, it still might well get him elected. George W. Bush was the Great Corrector: When he arrived in office, it was unquestioned that Europe would forever be allowed to harp and ankle-bite under the aegis of an assured American-led NATO. Support for old anti-Communist thugs and oil-pumpers was standard American policy in the Middle East. Afghanistan was a sewer best avoided. Three hundred and fifty thousand sorties over two-thirds of Saddam's air space; an unenforceable, corrupt, and counterproductive U.N. embargo of Iraq; and occasional indiscriminate bombing of the Iraqi homeland corralled Saddam while thousands of Iraqis perished each year.

Perhaps, without the impetus of 9/11, Bush would have let things be. But he did not—and embarked on radical and much-needed changes in U.S. foreign policy, which are already starting to bear fruit. Yet the hysteria that these corrections have prompted in Europe, the Arab world, and the U.N. wears at the American people. Many are tired of the pandemonium stirred up by the shrill Michael Moore, Howard Dean, and MoveOn.org—and, in some vague way, accept that the departure of George Bush might make things less stressful and hurtful. Like patients who finally rebel at the side-effects of their life-saving medicines, too many Americans know in their heads that what we are doing will save us—even as our hearts moan that in the here and now it is all so unpleasant and depressing to read the things they say abroad about George Bush's America.

Kerry, then, is the mellifluous Siren that appeals to beleaguered sailors. In lieu of the "neoconservatives" provoking rogue nations and terrorist sponsors, Kerry's subtlety, erudition, and nuance would charm others to address the "more important" (but less confrontational) problems of the environment, globalization, and drug smuggling. To win these "wars" we need not isolate an Arafat, ram democracies down the throats of Afghans and Iraqis, embarrass the Europeans, or talk of embedded pathologies within the Arab world. In short, Kerry has no foreign policy other than the Siren song that if George W. Bush would just go away, things would be so much quieter, people would be so much nicer, and we would be so much better liked. And all this might just work, until we hit the shoals. **NR**

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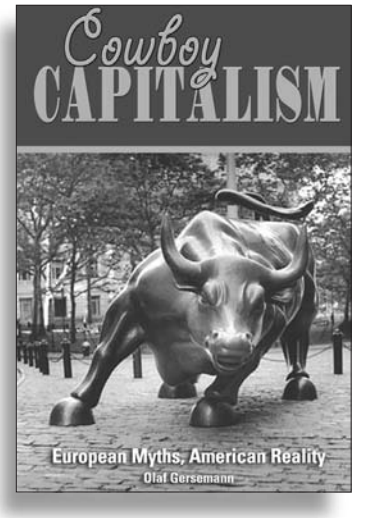
—Milton Friedman



While the U.S. economy may create more growth, Europeans think they are better off when it comes to job security, income equality, and other factors. But does European-style "comfy capitalism" really deliver better results than American "cowboy capitalism"?

German reporter Olaf Gersemann checked the facts and discovered that the greater market freedoms in the United States create a more flexible, adaptable, and prosperous system than the declining welfare states of Europe. *Cowboy Capitalism* is a provocative and devastating rebuttal to the stereotypes promoted by the likes of William Greider, Paul Krugman, and Michael Moore.

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HELP!!!!

I THINK THE DEMOCRATS WILL WIN.
WHY?
BECAUSE THEY STAYED "ON MESSAGE" FOR KERRY JUST LIKE THEY DID FOR CLINTON.
WHAT WAS THE KERRY MESSAGE?
HE FOUGHT IN VIETNAM.
WHAT WAS THE CLINTON MESSAGE?
VIETNAM DOESN'T MATTER.

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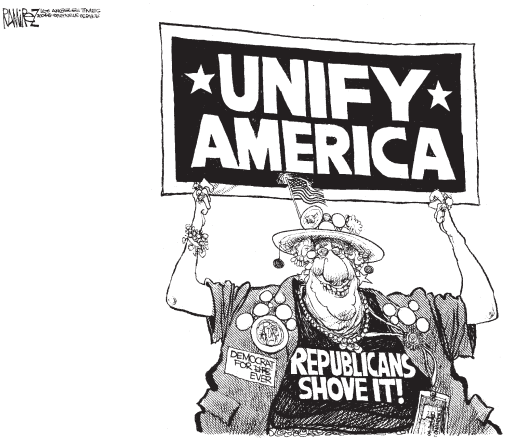
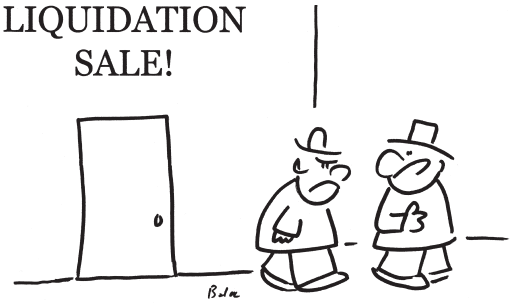
Kerry, Smoked Out

He would have been pre-emptive, too,
Although with more panache,
More allies (ask Joe Biden) and
More like the grunts in M*A*S*H.
How Michael Moore reacts to John's
Most recent fliperoo
Will be of interest to Karl Rove
And every kangaroo.

—W. H. von Dreele





"I told you it didn't have anything to do with beer."

"I THINK IT'S DISGUSTING (BUSH WAS AWOL IN GUARD DUTY) HOW PARTISAN CRITICS (BUSH WAS A DRAFT-DODGER) ATTACK (DADDY GOT BUSH IN THE GUARD) MY VIETNAM SERVICE!"

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the long view

ROB LONG

"The Frenchurian Candidate"

FADE IN:

EXTERIOR—AIRPORT TARMAC—DAY

A press conference in progress. Flashbulbs, camera crews, shouted questions. The Kerry campaign plane in the background.

Senator John Kerry stands at a makeshift lectern. A journalist shouts out a question.

JOURNALIST
Senator! Senator! You've said in the past rather emphatically that you were in Cambodia on Christmas Eve 1968. But the record contradicts that statement. Could you please clarify—

KERRY
I'm trying to—

JOURNALIST
Where were you, Senator?

KERRY
I was in Cambodia. I *was* in Cambodia . . .

JOURNALIST
But the record, sir—

KERRY
(losing focus, weaving)
I mean, I *think* I was. . . . I was . . . I was . . .

The SCREEN begins to dissolve . . .

EXTERIOR—CAMBODIAN HUT—DAY

Title Card: "Christmas, 1968. Cambodian jungle."

The camera pans around: A steamy day. Rice paddies in the distance. A meandering river. Ox carts. A small village.

A young John Kerry sits attentively at a small wooden table. Something, though, is not quite right about his eyes. They're wide and unblinking, as if he's been drugged or hypnotized. Across from him sit two men in wrinkled suits, FRANÇOIS and PIERRE.

PIERRE
Alors, Jean. Tu as bien fait tes . . . devoirs.

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
Merci, mon capitain.

PIERRE
Et maintenant, il faut retourner, tu comprends?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
Oui, mon capitain.

FRANÇOIS
(in a thick French accent)
Jean, I am now going to spik in Engleesh, all right?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
All right.

FRANÇOIS
You wheel remember nuzzing from thees day. You wheel remember nuzzing from our talks. You remember nuzzing from our first meeting, years ago, when you where a student in Sweetzerlan.
Is zees correct?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
Yes, captain.

PIERRE
Jean, tell us please. What is your mission?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
To return to the United States.

PIERRE
And?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
To become senator from Massachusetts.

PIERRE
And?

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
To become president of the United States.

PIERRE
Bon! Good, Jean, very very good.

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
Merci, mon capitain.

PIERRE
En anglais! En anglais!

YOUNG KERRY
(robotically)
Yes, captain. Sorry, captain.

FRANÇOIS
Eeets all right, Jean. Eeets all right. Now go back to your leetle boat and go back to your comrades. You wheel remember nuzzing. You wheel wake up out of zees trance when you see your first American uniform. We wheel nut contac you again . . . until your mission is accomplish.

PIERRE
Adieu, Jean.

The Young Kerry stands, still in a daze, and marches out of the hut. Pierre and François look at each other. In the distance, we hear the engine of a Swift boat sputter to life, roar, then fade into the distance. Pierre uncorks a bottle of wine and pours two glasses.

PIERRE
Theenk of it, François. An American press-ee-dawn, under zee direc control of France. Eeet is almost too absurd.

FRANÇOIS
Only eeef ze bran-washing remains effective, non?

PIERRE
Deed you see heem? Flat, emotionless tone. Totally wiz-out humor. Awkward feez-i-cal movement. Eeet is parfait! We have accomplish so much for La France!

FRANÇOIS
(muttering)
Eeef it work.

François takes a sip of wine.

PIERRE
You theenk he will not accomplish the mission?

FRANÇOIS
Perhaps part of eet. But to be press-ee-dawn?

François shrugs.

FRANÇOIS
I dunt know. Zere is som-zing about heem. Som-zing . . . I dunt know how to put eet, but eet is like, I dunt want to sit at a café weeth heem, tu comprends? I dunt want to have a glass of wine weeth him.

PIERRE
(nodding)
I feel zat too.

FRANÇOIS
All we can do is wait, I suppose.

PIERRE
Yes, wait. Wait until he run for press-ee-dawn, which according to French intelligence wheel be in 1992.

François raises a glass.

FRANÇOIS
To 1992.

Pierre raises his glass as well.

PIERRE
To 1992.

They clink glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR—AIRPORT TARMAC—DAY

The Kerry campaign plane streaks across the sky.

FADE OUT.

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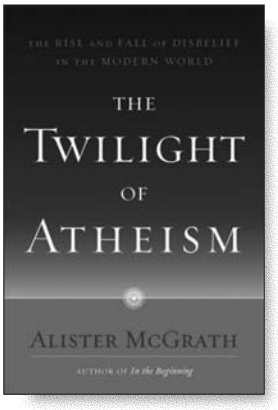
Believe It



The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World, by Alister McGrath (Doubleday, 306 pp., $23.95)

CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Not long ago—just 34 years ago, to be exact—"many had come to the view that religion was on its way out," Oxford University theologian Alister McGrath writes in his highly readable new book. In 1970, it seemed that social scientists' predictions were coming true: that first the industrialized West and then the fast-industrializing remainder of the world would follow an inexorable trajectory of secularization. Both the Catholic and the mainline Protestant churches in Europe and North America were in the throes of a crisis of confidence in which church attendance declined drastically. The future of Judaism looked terminal, at least as far as the beliefs and practices of highly assimilated Western Jews were concerned. Behind the Iron Curtain lay an enormous, powerful bloc of Marxist and hence officially atheistic states, and their numbers were growing as Marxist movements metastasized to Southeast Asia, the Mideast, Africa, and Latin America. In the United States, the theology du jour maintained that God was dead. In Europe, the fashion was liberation theology, which stripped traditional Christian beliefs of their transcendence and reduced them to the utter immanence of political revolution. Ex-Beatle John Lennon invited his listeners to enter a utopian world that would be devoid of conflict because it would be devoid of God: "Imagine there's no heaven; it's easy if you try / No hell below us, above us only sky."

As we know, none of this happened. After reaching its high-water mark during the early 1970s, secularism began to fade as a cultural influence, and the past 30 years have seen a resurgence of religion of nearly every kind: New Age "spirituality," the burgeoning of evangelical and pentecostal Christianity not just in America but throughout the Third World as well, the revival of Orthodox Judaism, and, of course, the rise of militant Islam. In *The Twilight of Atheism*, McGrath, a former atheist himself, attempts to explain why this happened: how it came to be that atheism, the hallmark of that powerful intellectual trinity—Darwin, Marx, and Freud—whose thinking defined atheism's golden age, the 19th and 20th centuries, is now the shrunken province of a handful of learned cranks and polemicists, such as the neo-Darwinist promoter Richard Dawkins and Michael Newdow, the doctor/lawyer/professional litigant who recently challenged the phrase "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Atheism per se did not exist until modern times. The Greeks and Romans had defined an atheist not as someone who disbelieved in God but as someone who rejected the traditional gods who protected the social order. Hence Socrates was an atheist, and so, in the eyes of the pagan Romans, were the early Christians. Almost everyone in the ancient and medieval worlds believed in a deity or deities. Atheism as we now know it, McGrath explains, grew up in one specific place, Western Europe (and its outposts in America and elsewhere), as a phenomenon of a specific time, the dawn of modernity, and as a reaction against a specific religion, Christianity. The roots of atheism, McGrath suggests, lay paradoxically in that primal phenomenon of Western modernity, the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers' efforts to purify the institutional church in order to make it more concordant with their vision of Jesus' authentic teachings generated a loss of trust in institutional religion in general. Furthermore, McGrath argues that the Reformers, by focusing upon the Bible as the sole source of God's revelation, effectively desacralized both the natural world and the secular human world, which in the integralist medieval Catholic view had been equally saturated with God's sacred presence. With the Reformation, "God became an absence in the world," writes McGrath.

Secular rulers' efforts to mediate the inevitable conflicts that developed between Catholicism and Protestantism and between different strains of Protestantism by mandating religious tolerance and limiting the influence of religion in public life led many to deem religion irrelevant and religious differences risible, like the squabbles between the Big-Enders and the Little-Enders in *Gulliver's Travels*. Add to that the rise of Cartesian skepticism and scientific naturalism among 17th- and 18th-century intellectuals, who tried to subject supernatural claims to laboratory-style empirical proof. If you could not prove the existence of God scientifically—and who can?—He must not exist.

Nonetheless, as McGrath points out, there were few genuine atheists even among the most antinomian of Enlightenment *philosophes*. Even Voltaire, like many of his Enlightenment contemporaries, was a Deist, a believer in a remote watchmaker-God, and his quarrel with religion was a quarrel with what he viewed as a corrupt Church in league with a tyrannical *ancien régime*. Nor until the mid-19th century did many scientists, or, for that matter, many religious leaders, assume the inherent conflict

Charlotte Allen, author of *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus*, co-edits the InkWell weblog for the Independent Women's Forum.

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between science and religion that is a standard assumption of our own time. To scientists and churchmen alike, scientific discoveries merely revealed the glory and intricacy of God's creation. (McGrath nicely demolishes as urban legend the tale of Bishop Samuel Wilberforce's sarcastically inquiring of evolutionist Thomas Huxley whether Huxley believed he was descended from the apes on his grandfather's side or his grandmother's side. Wilberforce was in fact a knowledgeable and sophisticated critic of Darwinism.) Charles Darwin indeed rejected God, or at least the Christian God—but not because his theory of evolution led him there. McGrath points out that Darwin lost his faith, rather, over the teaching, much stressed in Victorian evangelicalism, that the souls of unbelievers are eternally condemned to Hell.

Rather than an outgrowth of scientific discovery, atheism was a purely philosophic phenomenon launched by intellectuals mesmerized by science and what they believed to be scientific theory. Baron d'Holbach (1723-89) argued that the existence of the universe could—and should—be accounted for on strictly materialist grounds. The prolific Marquis de Sade championed the overthrow of religion as a precondition to absolute sexual, social, and political freedom. Sade's enthusiasm for libertine Godlessness found an echo in the French Revolution-besotted Romantic poets such as Shelley and, later in the century, Swinburne, who blamed the "pale Galilean" for casting a gray pall over Western culture and, specifically, for interfering with Swinburne's special sexual kink, having his buttocks flogged raw in brothels. Earlier, Ludwig Feuerbach had invoked d'Holbach's rigorous materialism in arguing that religious belief was a mere projection of human emotions and God a wishful human invention. Karl Marx adapted Feuerbach's theories and branded religion the "opium of the people," a comfort that enabled the masses to live with their oppressive social conditions until such time as revolution should sweep away both faith and the class system. It was but a step to Nietzsche's proclamation that God was dead (and we should make sure He stays that way), and to Freud's insistence that religion was an illusion to be replaced by scientifically grounded psychology.

Throughout most of the 20th century, Marx and Freud reigned supreme as the gods of modernity, to the point that the liberal mainline Christian churches committed "suicide" (McGrath's word) in terms of membership as they scrambled to accommodate their theologies to the idea that God no longer existed. In philosophy, fashionable existentialism and logical positivism deemed "God-talk" irrelevant. Eventually the idols came crashing down. Freud became thoroughly discredited as a scientist and physician, and one by one the vaunted Marxist societies were revealed to be not only economic disasters but vortexes of suffering and wholesale slaughter. Atheism had once been a "religion of the autonomous and rational human being," McGrath writes, possessed of a "powerful, self-confident, and aggressive worldview" that totalistically promised the understanding and hence the mastery of everything. What it delivered was totalistic, all right: the dreary uniformity of the Stalinist city and the Nazi concentration camp. It should not really be surprising, then, that atheism is now in retreat. McGrath nicely limns the visible decline in the intellectual stature of its propagandists: from Feuerbach to Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the foul-mouthed dysfunctional mother who led American Atheists in and out of courtrooms and press conferences until her murder by one of her underlings in 1995.

McGrath is an engaging, anecdote-loving writer with irenic sympathy for all his subjects, even the atheists, whose classic critique of Christianity as intolerant and corruption-prone he believes has spurred the churches to reform themselves in positive ways. I found him a shade too irenic. McGrath properly celebrates the passing of secular modernity but goes on to give too much credit to the postmodernist theorists who helped push modernity over the edge. He seems to forget that Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and their epigones are also militant atheists, with all the intolerance and totalitarian tendencies of that breed, and that academic postmodernism rests upon a Marxist substrate as surely as did Stalinism.

Even more distressing is the scant attention that McGrath pays to the highly credentialed and supremely self-confident Richard Dawkinses of the world. Science and religion need not be in conflict, but it remains the case (as McGrath himself notes) that atheistic scientific materialism is the religion of a strong plurality, perhaps the majority, of the world's scientists. They want to be known not as atheists but as "brights," smarter than and superior to the rest of us. The claims of such scientists—that their own interests and desires as the unacknowledged legislators of the world should prevail without restraint—are currently being played out in the political debate over government funding for embryonic stem-cell research. I wish that McGrath had entertained the possibility that atheism, while undoubtedly in philosophical and demographic twilight, may yet be experiencing a new dawn: a terrifying new alliance with money and power, of a kind even Marx could not have foreseen. **NR**

SUNLIGHT AND SILENCE

Of all my worldly goods and society,
Nothing is left but a table and chair,
A lamp casting dim light on a dark book,
And a grinning skull that will outstare
My blinking gaze unto eternity.

I gave my house to the homeless,
My money and shoes to the poor.
If that brings them no balm or happiness,
They are no worse off than before.
I gave my friends to each other,
My enemies to themselves. I pray
No favor of God or man except
Sunlight and silence where I might find
Some way to slow the minutes of a day,
Save motes of hours from Time's wind.

What have I given that I should have kept?
What have I kept I should have given away?

—DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

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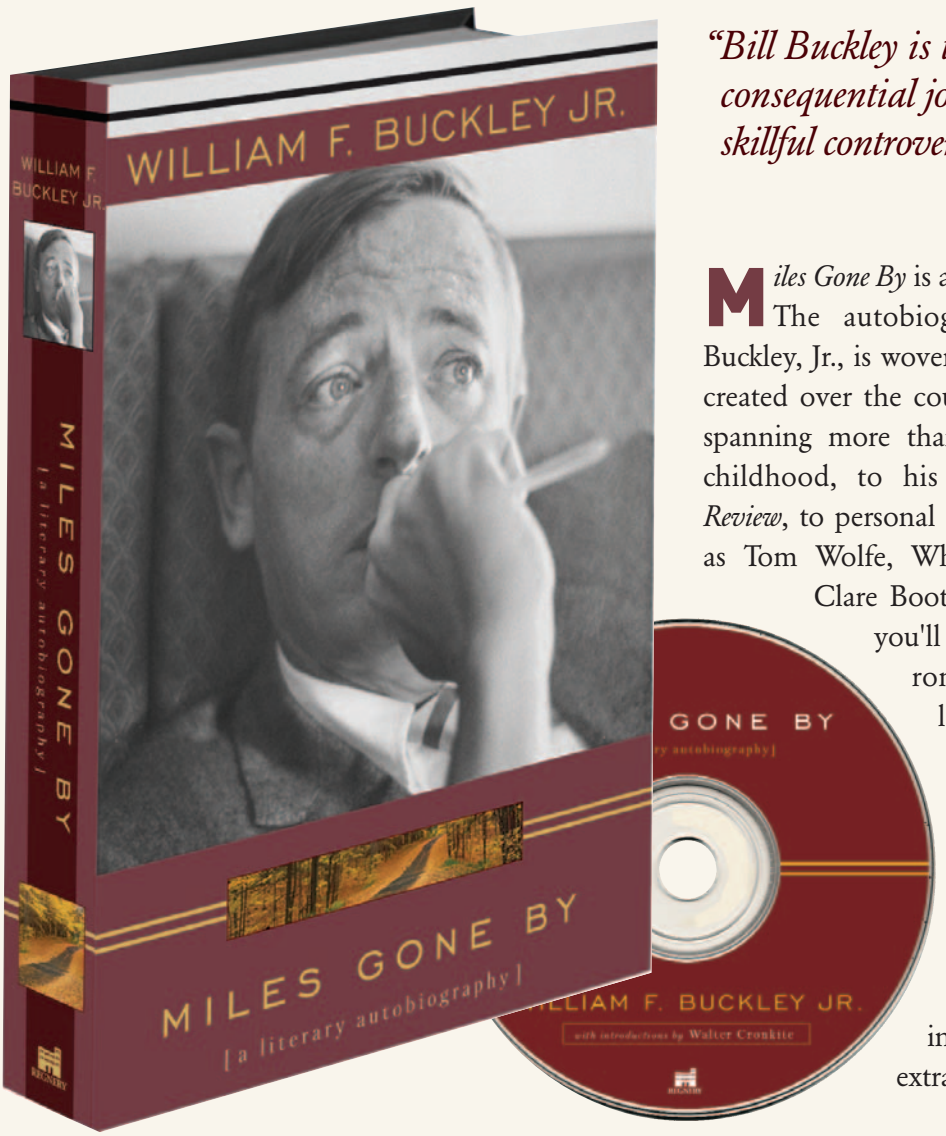

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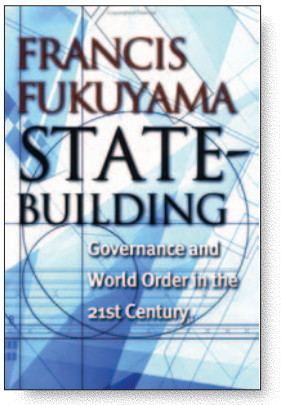
Solid States



State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century, by Francis Fukuyama (Cornell, 160 pp., $21)

JOHN FONTE

THIS is a very useful, intelligent, and short book by Francis Fukuyama, a leading political thinker. It examines a central issue in the age of terrorism: the perils (and sometimes necessities) of "state-building" in weak and failed states. One hopes it will become a must-read for State Department policymakers.

Fukuyama begins by describing how the "Washington consensus" of the early 1990s—an emphasis on privatization and market economics—has given way to a new conventional wisdom since 1997 that "institutions matter": an emphasis on legal systems, accountability, transparency, commercial norms, and democratic values. Fukuyama quotes Milton Friedman as saying that he was "wrong" in his emphasis on the privatization of public institutions in the heady days after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As Friedman recently told Fukuyama: "It turns out that the rule of law is probably more basic than privatization."

If institutions are crucial, what have we learned about them? Fukuyama skillfully walks the reader through major arguments about organizational theory. He is adept at dissecting the jargon of the field—words and phrases such as "satisficing," "stovepiping," "transaction intensity," and "low-specificity activities"—in ways that should retain the interest of the non-specialist reader.

There are two broad theories of organizations. The first is an economic model that assumes that members of organizations (both public and private) act as self-interested individuals. This theory therefore seeks to build rational, mathematical models to predict behavior; incentives (usually monetary) are emphasized as a way to improve performance. The second model is sociological, positing that individuals in organizations often act in non-rational ways. The premise of this model is that informal norms, values, group goals, shared experience, the "culture" of an organization, leadership, and other non-rational factors often prevail over self-interested calculation.

While recognizing that incentives are important, Fukuyama leans toward the sociological model—because, he notes, "the [economic] assumption that people in organizations are motivated primarily by individual self-interest" is just "too limited." He points out that an employee who joins an organization "simply to have a job" can end up developing "intense loyalty to other members of her team working nights and weekends to help the team defeat a rival." Conversely, another employee might intensely dislike a co-worker and do "everything he can to undermine that person even at the expense of the broader organization and his own career."

The humanitarian interventions of the 1990s created a de facto international imperial power and set a precedent that national sovereignty was not an absolute.

Fukuyama writes that "public administration is idiosyncratic and not subject to broad generalization"; so there is no general social-scientific theory of organizations or public administration that could assist developing nations. But while there are no lists of "best practices" that foreign-aid officials should promote, this "organizational ambiguity" does not mean that anything goes: There are "bad practices" (cronyism, corruption) to be avoided.

Fukuyama—author of an earlier book on "social capital"—believes that culture, values, and norms are crucial, while also recognizing that culture can change over time and that "over-punctilious deference to local customs" can be counterproductive. In the end, Westerners hoping to build "institutional capacity" in developing nations need to combine knowledge of foreign administrative practices with "a deep understanding of local constraints, opportunities, habits, norms, and conditions." Thus, "institutional solutions need to be developed not just with input or buy-in from the local officials who will be running the local institutions, but *by* them." Indeed, according to Fukuyama, the "single most important obstacle" to institutional development in poor countries is "insufficient domestic demand" for reform. The author has some favorable things to say about the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account and the general policy of the National Endowment for Democracy because they allow locals to develop their own projects, and be held accountable for them. Under this model, "demand" comes from the locals.

After examining the problems of weak states and reviewing the relevant academic literature, Fukuyama turns to questions of sovereignty and international legitimacy. He contends that weak or failing states have become the "single most important problem for international order." These states have weakened the very principle of sovereignty: The humanitarian interventions of the 1990s created a de facto international imperial power in such places as Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and East Timor and set a precedent that national sovereignty was not an absolute. Yet the efforts of the U.N., U.S., and EU in this international imperium have met with very limited success in assisting the development of indigenous institutions. Fukuyama notes that the American his-

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torical record in places like Haiti, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Philippines (and, recently, Iraq) suggests the limited (and long-term) nature of successful state-building. He argues that the interventions of the 1990s were, nonetheless, worthwhile because they responded to immediate humanitarian crises; sometimes nations must address short-term problems and defer the long-term institutional issues. Moreover, says Fukuyama, the threat of terrorism in the post-9/11 world dictates that future attempts at state-building (in some form and despite the myriad limitations noted) cannot be avoided.

My only serious disagreement with Fukuyama's analysis comes in his examination of U.S.–European differences over democratic legitimacy at the international level. Fukuyama states that Americans believe legitimacy "is rooted in the will of democratic majorities in constitutional nation-states," while Europeans believe it is "based on principles of justice higher than wills or laws of particular nation-states," and that it "flows from the will of an international community." Fukuyama says the "European view is correct in an abstract sense" because there is a moral realm beyond nation-states, "but wrong in practice."

In fact, Fukuyama is unnecessarily ceding the moral high ground to continental European elites by mischaracterizing the American view as nakedly majoritarian: The American regime is founded on "natural rights" as well as "consent," while the EU is based neither on the consent of the governed nor on inherent natural rights, but on "values" that are constantly "evolving" and thus simply the conventional wisdom of elites at a particular moment. The European view is correct neither in principle nor in practice. Americans as much as (actually, more than) European elites believe in a higher moral realm of political legitimacy—but, as Princeton's Robert George has noted, they also believe that unelected elites (national or transnational) are not the sole interpreters of what constitutes this moral realm and universal human rights.

Like Robert Kagan in his 2003 book *Of Paradise and Power*, Fukuyama assumes a monolithic "European" view that ignores both popular opinion in Europe and traditional British views of democratic sovereignty that differ from Franco-German thinking. Again like Kagan, Fukuyama is overly solicitous of continental elites and their creation, the EU. Far from being an "end of history" paradise this entity could more accurately be characterized as a "post-democracy" bureaucratic regime.

That said, in his final section Fukuyama rightly rejects the "twilight of sovereignty" crowd, "whether . . . proponents of the free market on the right or committed multilateralists on the left." Power (including "traditional military power" and "soft power," like "the art of nation-building") exercised by sovereign nation-states is necessary for international security. The "motley collection of multinational corporations, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, militias, terrorist groups, and so forth" is no effective substitute for the sovereign nation-state: Our task, Fukuyama says, is to "try to understand once again how to make [the nation-state] strong and effective" while at the same time keeping its functions limited. **NR**

Cursed and Blessed

Dylan Thomas: A New Life,
by Andrew Lycett
(Overlook, 434 pp., $35)

ALGIS VALIUNAS

MODERN poets all too often live lives that, but for their poetry, differ little from those of common stewbums, wastrels, lunatics, or brutes. Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), a writer of superb gifts, hit the pathological jackpot: He was an alcoholic who squandered his talent, hallucinated on occasion, and alternately beat and betrayed his wife. Andrew Lycett's new biography tends to scant the loveliness Thomas had in him—his poems and

Mr. Valiunas is a literary journalist and author of *Churchill's Military Histories*.

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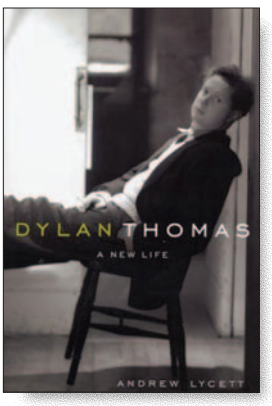
stories get only perfunctory mention—and to dwell relentlessly on the undeniable beastliness. Such is the inevitable fate of the *poète maudit*, the cursed poet, at a time when the critical biography, which attends properly to the works as well as the days, has largely given way to the life plain and simple and quite separate from the very literature that made the biography worth writing in the first place. Lycett recounts the sad business with deft narrative pace and an eye for the memorable detail, but one cannot help thinking how the book might have been improved by 50 pages devoted to a serious consideration of Thomas's writings.

Of course, the hellion's life does have a certain appeal, like that of a 100-m.p.h. joyride in a stolen car, topped off by a fiery crash—provided that one can go along for the ride but witness the conflagration from a safe distance. Thomas was famously drunk and disorderly everywhere from his native Wales to London to the length and breadth of the United States, and his antics were entertaining for a while, to him and his friends and the reader of his life story. In the wild sensual onslaught of simple beer Thomas even discovered a rare beauty, as described in his story "Old Garbo": "I liked the taste of beer, its live, white lather, its brass-bright depths, the sudden world through the wet brown walls of the glass, the tilted rush to the lips and the slow swallowing down to the lapping belly, the salt on the tongue, the foam at the corners." But the delights of being luminously sozzled fatally dragged Thomas under, into the drunkard's hapless inanition. Vomiting, bedwetting, and defecating in the living room of disagreeable relatives lacked the charm of public-house conviviality and boozy eloquence. Drunken promiscuity sooner or later landed him in the beds of "a Jewess with thighs like boiled string" (in Thomas's inimitable words), an older woman who urinated standing up (the sex wizard Havelock Ellis taught her), and a male friend with whom he really did not wish to become so intimate.

Love and marriage did not help: One miscreant bound himself to another. From the age of twelve, Caitlin Macnamara was, according to her sister, "a honey pot for men," and Thomas tumbled in head over heels, fighting off her lover, the priapic painter Augustus John, to get at the sweets. Thomas liked his women, when he was serious about them, untamed and remarkable, and Caitlin was certainly "crazy-Bohemian enough for him," in the words of a rival whom Thomas spurned. He did not have sole possession for long, if at all; nor did she. Their courtship was interrupted by bouts of gonorrhea; their marriage soon descended into tit-for-tat adultery and caterwauling rages. Lycett ascribes more of the blame to Caitlin than Thomas's earlier biographer Paul Ferris did, and Lycett seems to be right. When the aforementioned upstanding woman proposed a threesome to the young married couple, Thomas turned her down, but Caitlin pronounced herself game. Thomas would be game for adventures of his own soon enough. The poison of drunken waywardness took hold early, and ravaged them both.



On a lucrative and sexually freewheeling poetry-reading tour of America, at the age of 39, in New York, Thomas died of alcoholic poisoning, complicated by an ill-advised dose of morphine administered by a fashionable doctor. Caitlin flew in from London to see her comatose husband, went berserk at the sight, and was committed to a mental hospital; she would later attempt suicide by throwing herself from a third-story window.

But for Dylan there was the poetry; and there is a rich tradition of broken souls holding themselves together with string, clothespins, Elmer's glue, and the exaltation of high art. Baudelaire, dying of syphilis; Mallarmé, thinking daily of suicide; Hart Crane, drinking his way toward the fatal plunge from a steamship off the Florida coast—all revered the doomed Edgar Allan Poe as a patron saint who would help them gain admittance to poets' heaven. Thomas would serve a similar purpose for John Berryman, who was the only person present when Dylan died, and who would number his friend among the ruined giants in his tear-streaked literary pantheon.

For Thomas, poetry was a refuge of spiritual purity, and he could not bear its being contaminated by politics, as in the widely lionized work of Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, W. H. Auden, and C. Day Lewis—MacSpaunday to their enemies. Thomas's bumbling political innocence sometimes fell far short of winsomeness. In July 1938 he wrote to a friend, "I think a squirrel stumbling at least of equal importance as Hitler's invasions." Shortly after the war began, he declared, "My little body . . . I don't intend to waste for the mysterious ends of others. If there's any profiteering to be done, I in my fashion wish to be in on it." Thomas worked for the BBC during the war, and earned more money than he had ever seen before. Lycett pretty well ignores Thomas's peaceable follies, which Ferris, from whose book the damning quotations above are taken, treats more fully, and with iron disdain.

Still, political opinions are not art, and Thomas turned the raw awareness of the world's cruelty that made him a pacifist into some extraordinary stories and poems. That celebration must be won from all but unendurable pain is his greatest theme, and it makes "Who Do You Wish Was With Us?" one of the most beautiful short stories in the English language. Two friends, a boy and a young man, go off on an outing to the Worm's Head, an island of primordial rock accessible from the seashore at low tide. Their perfect day is disfigured by the psychic presence of the young man's dead father and brother, whom they had been trying to banish from their minds for the moment. As they think of the missing, the tide comes in and strands them on the rock; but the grief that separates them from the festive mainlanders comes to seem not so much a disfigurement as a completion, in the way life is completed by sadness inextricable from joy.

In Thomas's best poetry, the impulse to praise nearly always overcomes the

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longing to howl. "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London," one of his wartime poems, scorns conventional decent grief and embraces the glory of the divine arrangements behind this tragedy, however heartless they might seem. The inconsolable is consoled by the indifference of nature—"the unmourning water Of the riding Thames"—which possesses a majestic rightness that ordinary churchly sentiment cannot approach. Another great wartime poem, "Ceremony after a Fire Raid," deepens the theme of the death of innocents:

> Myselves
> The grievers
> Grieve
> Among the street burned to tireless death
> A child of a few hours
> With its kneading mouth
> Charred on the black breast of the grave
> The mother dug, and its arms full of fires.

The opening syntactical conundrum (a device Berryman was to adopt in *The Dream Songs*) suggests a pain that all suffer and a loss that all mourn. In the agony that renders subject indistinguishable from object is found the ultimate democratic solidarity; this is Thomas's tortured 20th-century gloss on Walt Whitman's signature line, "I am the man; I suffer'd; I was there." Everyone suffers, everyone is there, and from this pain Thomas wrests a heroic affirmation: "Glory glory glory."

Thomas's gravest flaw as a poet is his flair for the unintelligible sublime; the torrential outpour from the open word-spigot washes away any evidence of thought, and leaves the poet drunk and reeling with a love of pure sound. But at his best—in the poems mentioned above as well as in "And death shall have no dominion," "Find meat on bones," "Do not go gentle into that good night," "On a Wedding Anniversary," "In My Craft or Sullen Art," "Fern Hill," and "Over Sir John's Hill"—Dylan Thomas is one of the great 20th-century poets in English. The true poet, he declared toward the end of his life, "sings in the direction of his pain." He surely had pain enough, and sometimes he knew just what to make of it. **NR**

■ FILM ■

Night Moves

THOMAS S. HIBBS

"How come we never heard about the magic rocks before?" asks a befuddled character in ***The Village***, M. Night Shyamalan's new film. By this point in the film, audience confusion will likely have given way to irritation. Shyamalan, who has brought us such dramatically compelling and subtly frightening films as *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Unbreakable* (2000), and *Signs* (2002), here produces an absurd film, with an incredible plot that veers unintentionally from its intended genre of horror into comedy. It may not be the worst film of the year—*The Day After Tomorrow* remains a serious contender—but it certainly ranks as the most disappointing.

The disappointment is a consequence of the expectations aroused by Shyamalan's previous efforts. With *The Sixth Sense*, Shyamalan announced a new beginning in the horror genre. The gory, nihilistic bloodfest into which horror movies had sunk in the 1990s put filmmakers in a bind: The genre and its audience had increasing, and increasingly jaded, expectations for the aesthetics of evil, spurring competition to outdo previous films in the quantity and quality of the acts of maiming, raping, decapitating, and murdering victims. The greatest novelty to emerge in the late 1990s was the genre's degeneration into self-conscious parody in the *Scream* and *Scary Movie* films.

Then came Shyamalan. *The Sixth Sense* appeared in the same year as *The Blair Witch Project*; even more than *Blair Witch*, whose scares rested mostly on the gimmickry of a hand-held camera, *Sense* returned us to less overt forms of horror, predicated upon audience sympathy with the dilemmas of the characters. Shyamalan self-consciously locates himself in the tradition of Hitchcock, who once said, "There is no terror in the bang,

Mr. Hibbs, a contributor to National Review Online, is the author of *Shows About Nothing*.

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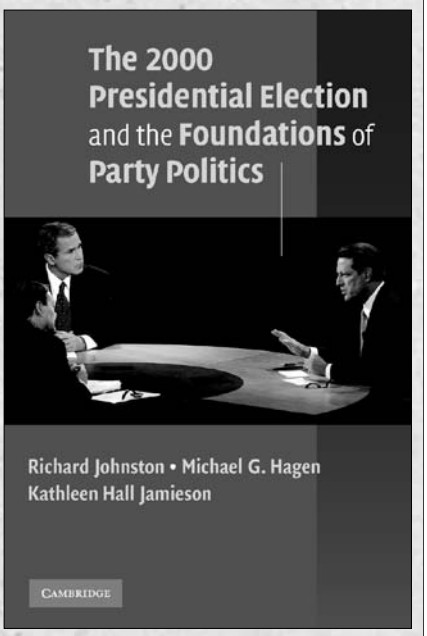
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only in the anticipation of it." Like Hitchcock, Shyamalan appears in his own films—you can spy him as the one revealing secrets at the end of *The Village*. At his best, Shyamalan slowly builds the tensions and then delivers bangs, as in Cole Sear's sudden vision of ancient hangings in his modern-day Philadelphia grade school in *The Sixth Sense* or the appearances of the aliens in *Signs*.

Much more than Hitchcock, Shyamalan exhibits an abiding interest in questions of faith and divine providence. *The Sixth Sense* is pitched at the intersection of life and death, where souls struggle for reconciliation, for a way of putting their lives in order; *Signs* is about the loss and recovery of faith, about the fundamental option between chance and providence. Of course, these films are also about fear: fear of death, fear of being trapped in the evils of the past, and fear of individual and cultural catastrophe from an unexpected malevolent intervention.

The theme of fear, in this case fear of the entire, tainted modern world, is once again at the forefront in *The Village*, which features a late-19th-century Amish-like community that has purposely isolated itself from the rest of society. In this film, Shyamalan wants to create a mood of unseen but encroaching menace, the sort of mood captured so effectively in Peter Weir's underappreciated *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975). In *The Village*, the menace, represented as the "ones we don't speak of," is associated with the color red, the "bad color."

A boundary demarcates village property from the woods, where the threatening creatures live, and beyond which is the civilized world. The menacing creatures, blamed for the mutilation of animals on village property, make an appearance fairly early in the film, wearing red outfits that make them look like giant rats in Little Red Riding Hood costumes. Viewers will likely already have anticipated the truth about the mysterious creatures by the time it is revealed just over midway through the film. From this moment forward, the lingering question concerns the community's motive in removing itself from the wider world.

The community's forebears, it turns out, were afflicted and infected with greed and violence. One character, played by Sigourney Weaver, keeps mementos of evil things from the past stored in a chest. She explains to her now adult son, Lucius Hunt (Joaquin Phoenix), that she keeps them to fend off forgetfulness, which would in turn allow the evils to return. But there is no effective strategy to fend off the past. Escape and isolation seem futile: "You run from sorrow . . . but sorrow will find you. It can smell you."

In this case what reconnects the community to the wider world is the desire to assist the sick and dying, through the aid of modern medicine. Lucius requests that he be allowed to travel through the forbidden forest to secure the medicine. Initially, the community leader, Edward Walker (William Hurt in a stilted performance), resists. But when Lucius, who is betrothed to Walker's blind daughter, Ivy, is himself in need of medicine, Ivy (in a remarkable first performance from Ron Howard's daughter, Bryce Dallas Howard) prevails upon her father to let her travel through the woods.

This is the point at which the magic-rocks question is posed, at roughly the same time that a village elder asks Walker why he would send a blind girl on such a mission. A good question, that—one of many viewers will pose about the plot of this film, questions to which Shyamalan provides only flimsy responses.

There are scenes that work in *The Village*: a stabbing that comes with a jolt and a number of scenes in the woods, the latter of which are reminiscent of *Blair Witch*. But the terror here comes mostly from the cinematography, from the way in which the stabbing is framed and the shifting back and forth in the woods between tight, claustrophobic shots of characters and sweeping shots of the swaying trees.

The story is a kind of parable about fear and evil, about the human longing to recover and protect innocence, and about the costly and futile attempt to construct a pristine and safe world. But it fails because its themes and moods are not woven into a credible plot. In his previous successes, Shyamalan's tricks capped off enticing plots and captivating character development. In *The Village*, he is too taken with his own cleverness, a suspicion reinforced by his own participation in the Sci Fi Channel's faux documentary, *The Buried Secret of M. Night Shyamalan*. In the documentary, as in *The Village*, he relies entirely on his bag of tricks, from which he pulls one desultory surprise after another. **NR**

■ MUSIC ■

Mozart Et Al.

JAY NORDLINGER

Salzburg, Austria

THIS is Mozart's town—and don't you forget it. Of course, you can't: His portrait greets you at the airport, and it's stamped on all the candy. People dress up as him, on the streets (e.g., in woodwind ensembles). Every January, the local Mozarteum holds a "Mozart Week." Truth is, every week's a Mozart week—and not just in Salzburg, but throughout the musical world.

The American Friends of the Salzburg Festival offers a series of talks; your correspondent is their moderator. Our first speaker is Prof. Dr. Rudolph Angermüller, of the Mozarteum. He is a musicologist and a big authority on Mozart—anything and everything about him. His topic for us is "Mozart and Money." You have perhaps heard that Mozart died a pauper, buried without notice. This is bunk.

Mozart, in fact, earned a ton of money—he was both rich and famous. But he lost a lot of money, too, and he was always sponging. How did he lose it? Gambling, mainly. When he wasn't composing, he was gambling—and when he was in arrears, he composed with a special urgency. We have another Mozart scholar on hand, too: Prof. Dr. Günther G. Bauer. He has just completed a book on Mozart and gambling. "Did he have what today we would call an addiction?" I ask. "Exactly," comes the answer.

Speaking of bunk: That movie, *Amadeus*? Bunk—false from beginning to end. But an enjoyable flick, many say.

The Salzburg Festival, as usual, is filled with Mozart, and given prominent place is a production of *Così fan tutte*. This is notable for several reasons, one of which is the youth of its cast—and its conductor. This is Philippe Jordan, born in 1974, son of the venerable Swiss conductor Armin Jordan. Philippe made a big impression in New York last summer, at the Mostly Mozart Festival, and he has Salzburg abuzz, too. A major career awaits him.

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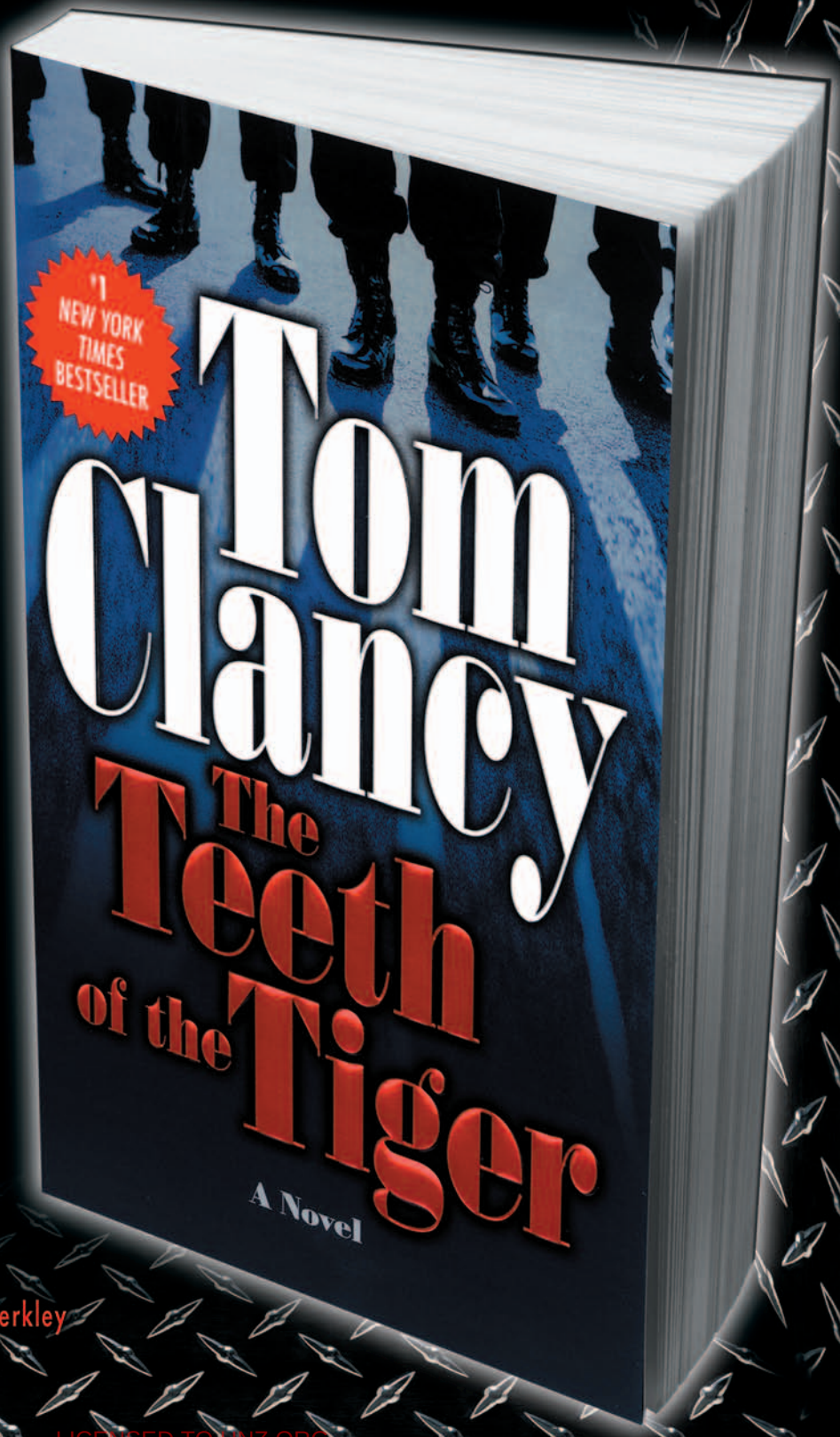

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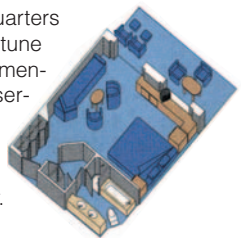

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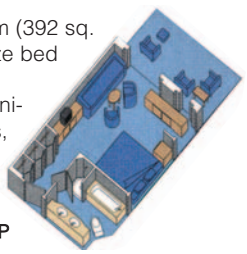

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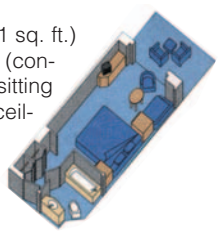

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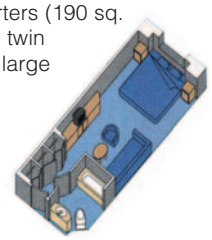

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Indeed, he has already begun it.

Also at the beginning of a major career is Elīna Garanča, the Latvian mezzo-soprano who is part of this youthful cast. She has everything: voice, technique, personality, stage sense, and looks—lots of it. If you don't think this counts in opera, I have coffee for you to smell. As Dorabella, Garanča fairly dominates this *Così*.

And I'd like to mention the tenor, Saimir Pirgu, who is an excellent singer, although that's not the reason I'd like to mention him: He is an Albanian, an unusual thing to be in opera (or anywhere else). But the beauty part? His character, Ferrando, is one of the two guys who, in the elaborate trick of this opera, disguise themselves as "Albanians"—and here we have a real-live Albanian, pretending to be an Albanian.

This may not sound like much to you, but, trust me, opera people find it hilarious.

Along with the youngsters, two veterans appear in this cast, Sir Thomas Allen (Don Alfonso) and Helen Donath (Despina). Helen Donath? Yes, she's still singing, in her mid-60s, and singing well. She has had mainly a European career, married to Klaus Donath, the German pianist and conductor. In fact, many suppose that she is European—Austro-German. But she is from Corpus Christi, Texas, a land she left many decades ago. Chances are, she is better known in Vienna and Berlin than in Corpus Christi.

The next speaker in the American Friends series is Tony Palmer, the British filmmaker. He has made 108 films—count 'em, 108—most of them on musical subjects (Wagner, Stravinsky, Callas, Menuhin). He has also ventured into the popular culture, treating such subjects as Liberace and Hugh Hefner (though not together, alas). In 1974, he made a movie called *The World of Miss World*, a must-see.

He is currently at work on a film about Korngold, featuring Benjamin Schmid. Who is Korngold? Erich Wolfgang Korngold, the Viennese composer who was hailed—rightly—as the greatest child prodigy since Mozart, and who spent a long exile in Hollywood, writing for the movies. Who is Schmid? A young Austrian violin sensation, who is affiliated with the Mozarteum. The festival is emphasizing Korngold this year: Schmid played the violin concerto at the opening concert; later, he participated in—led, really—the Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left Hand (commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, the pianist who lost his right arm in World War I).

The biggest Korngold work on offer is the opera *Die tote Stadt*, based on the Rodenbach novel *Bruges-la-Morte*. We host a lecture on the subject—the opera and the novel—by another Professor Doktor, Jürgen Maehder, of the Free University in Berlin. He is a musicologist of extraordinarily wide learning. His wife, Kii-Ming Lo, is a second musicologist, at the Normal University in Taiwan. They divide their time between Taipei and Berlin—an amazing commute, so to speak. Present for the *Tote Stadt* lecture is Korngold's granddaughter and her family, residents of Portland, Ore. She looks uncannily like him. Or am I just willing that? I don't think so.

The festival's production—Willy Decker, director—is a big success, with Torsten Kerl and Angela Denoke making a splendid Paul and Marietta, and Donald Runnicles, the Scottish conductor, doing a competent job in the pit. He currently holds positions in San Francisco, New York, and Atlanta. He was recently quoted in the Austrian press as saying that, if Bush wins re-election, he may well quit those posts—because once would be a "mistake," whereas a second election would mean "they actually want him." If the president wins, I imagine music in America will struggle on. I have a list of others whom I might nominate to shun the country—some of them homegrown!

Speaking of homegrown: The next event in the Friends series is a talk with Chester Patton, a bass from Mississippi. He is appearing in Bellini's *Capuleti e i Montecchi*, a bel canto *Romeo and Juliet*. Mr. Patton is not the most famous singer from Mississippi: That would be Leontyne Price, of Laurel (though Elvis Presley, of Tupelo, really takes the cake). Patton is from Columbia, although, as he says, he's not from the town, but "the county"—way out. He grew up in a music-loving family of nine children. Asked which singers he admired back when, he names, somewhat sheepishly, Michael Jackson. He has been compared to Paul Robeson, but he says that that is ridiculous, because their voices are nothing alike: It's just a matter of skin color. This reminds me of the critic who said of a certain young soprano (black), "She's the next Leontyne Price." That girl was as likely to be the next Leontyne Price as I am. But such is the hold of race.

Our final guest is a native Salzburger, Angelika Kirchschlager, the mezzo-soprano. She is doing the title role of *Der Rosenkavalier*, wowing 'em. She first appeared at the Salzburg Festival at the age of ten—she was in the children's chorus for *Carmen*. Later, she sold Mozart candies at what many of us consider the best café in town—Fürst. She also sold records, to the likes of Thomas Hampson, who are now colleagues. This summer, she is nearly the toast of the festival, and her parents are "bursting with pride," she concedes. You can go home again (Kirchschlager fled Salzburg 20 years ago), perhaps especially when you're on top of the world.

The *Rosenkavalier* production is "controversial," to use the polite word for . . . well, words that are less polite. The Canadian director Robert Carsen has set the third act, not in a tavern, but in a whorehouse, and we have lots of nudity, which is par for the course in Salzburg—I mean, in the opera productions—and also simulated copulation, fellatio, and other Strauss-Hofmannsthal necessities. Someone says to me, "Did it distract you?" I answer, "I couldn't take my eyes off it." And he guffaws as if to say, "Shame on you—you have only yourself to blame"—to which I retort, "But they [Carsen et al.] wanted me to look at it. That's why they put it there—certainly not to be ignored!"

Anyway, I have been pronouncing my Salzburg Rule: In the audience, they're overdressed; onstage, they're underdressed. But then people like me say, "Quel scandale," and the festival powers-that-be just smile, having achieved their objective. Again. **NR**

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■ CITY DESK ■

Grammar of A Scent

RICHARD BROOKHISER

SMELL is the uncultivated sense. We have lost the sensitivity of dogs and sharks, and we do not improve the little that we retain. Sight, hearing, and taste have all been disciplined by the arts, and you may sample the results in concert halls, museums, and restaurants, but although there are such things as perfumes and gardens, smell mostly shambles along by itself. In summer, it comes into its own, even for humans, even in the man-made city. Heat and humidity call up New York's smells like the sorcerer's apprentice.

Despite the second stanza of "Song of Myself"—"Houses and rooms are full of perfumes"—Walt Whitman didn't write a lot about smells; the great sensualist was an eye and ear man. Have we discovered Whitman's inner prig? Or did he just leave town in August, like a shrink? No homebound Gothamite can afford to be as chaste in his perceptions as Whitman was.

Demolition and construction sites have an unmistakable smell: damp and slightly sweet. You associate it with cloven halves of old buildings, showing the ghosts of staircases, like tattoos on their stripped walls; or with scaffold-covered detours, wet with run-off, where some new building is going up. It is not the smell of dirt or rock. I suspect it is old cement, powdering away, or new cement freshly poured. If so, then the Romans smelled it when they put up the Pantheon.

Construction sites smash the past and build the future. In the present we have transportation, and the smell of exhaust. What pedestrian has not crossed a street just close enough to a turning bus to get the full facial blast? Bus exhaust smells like cigarettes, only dustier. If Mayor Bloomberg really cared about our health, he would ban these beasts. On some summer evenings, when the sky settles down like a lid, and the setting sun is the color of a scab, the whole city becomes a bus's backwash, and our only consolation is to know that our ancestors had it worse, for their omnibuses were pulled by horses.

Our natural impulse is to hide our mistakes. Where smells are concerned, that means air freshener. Air freshener smells like a wad of bubblegum, if it were the size of a softball. The great users of these sweet stinkbombs are cabbies. Some of their devices, dangling from the rear-view mirror or the Plexiglas partition, are shaped, with cruel cheeriness, like pine trees, so you'll think you're in the Adirondacks. Once one of these has been hanging in a car, its work is done, and it does no good to ask the cabbie to take it down. Your only recourse it to roll down the windows and hope the cabbie drives fast, though that leaves you prey to buses.

Smell is closely related to its more respectable cousin, taste. Restaurants and markets produce some of the city's best smells, offering a palette edited for human pleasure. The Brazilian restaurant has a stand for mixed non-alcoholic drinks by its front door. The menu board lists combinations of fruit, vegetables, and herbs, which are supposed to increase potency or memory. All day an immigrant shoves oranges, carrots, ginger, pineapples into a blender. Juice comes out the spout, scraps disappear down a plastic tube. The fruit smells predominate, but they have a colorful aura, as if they were wearing tropical shirts.

Little India has replaced the Armenian neighborhood that once existed around Lexington Avenue and 28th Street. Among the storefronts offering saris, brass knick-knacks, plane tickets, and cassettes in strange modes and languages are shops selling spices—and the restaurants that put them to work. (One especially well-stocked grocery occupies the building in which Chester Alan Arthur was sworn in as president.) For Indian taste, too much isn't enough. The spices jostle with our nostrils and each other, a fight club for smells.

Chinese food is anything but bland, yet one smell dominates in Chinatown: fish. Salty and sour, the fish lie in silver rows, eyes and cheeks turned innocently heavenward. The fishmongers shout and shuffle them like cards. A day ago they were in the Atlantic; tonight they will be in a pot. The bars on Second Avenue that service New York University pack kids in like sardines. The music and the screaming form a wall with no door in it; you must simply walk through, past the bouncer. Screamers spill out onto the sidewalk to smoke, but you cannot smell their cigarettes. The smell that rules is beer, sweet but acrid, making a little tug at the back of your throat. The beer and the beer smell flow all night; early next morning, when the drinkers have gone, the smell remains.

We eat because nature demands it; after we eat, nature continues to take its course. Civilization allows us to perform this function in privacy. Dogs do not have that privilege. The laws of New York now compel owners to clean up after their pets, and with surprising devotion, they do. But self-indulgence makes for occasional lapses. As is so often the case with dogs, we react (in this case, with displeasure) because of a powerful sense of kinship. Dogs have extra legs and no driver's licenses. But that smiling, loping, thirsty, obedient, defecating creature—who is he like?

The final assault, what socialists call *la lutte finale*, happens on a day when a holiday, or perhaps a strike, coincides with temperatures in the 90s. Then the assault comes from garbage. The garbage sits in its plastic bags, humbly waiting to be recycled. The bags form trench walls, as in a daguerrotype by Mathew Brady. Unidentifiable liquid leaks out. The leaves of the ailanthus trees, and their shadows, do not move. Some poor deliveryman pedals by on a bicycle. This smell goes beyond dog waste and personality; it touches religion. "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Time for the chill in the air, the rain. NR

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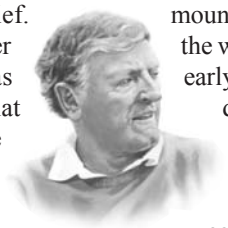
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

The New Warhawk

NEW YORK, AUGUST 10

Six months ago I ventured in this space that the Democratic position on the war in Iraq was the single most critical question in U.S. politics. The statement made on Monday by Senator Kerry is the climactic event in this matter. Senator Kerry said that notwithstanding all that is known now, whatever have been the developments in the past year, if he had it to do again, he'd vote as he did: in favor of giving the president the power he requested, before going on to wage war in Iraq.

Kerry made this faintly more tolerable to the anti-war segment by saying that he was pleading, after all, a point of constitutional rectitude: the president should have the power inherent in his role as commander-in-chief. Kerry did not trouble to ponder what it is the Constitution was talking about when it said that only Congress could declare war. Never mind; we don't declare wars any more, we just fight.



But outstanding in political meaning was less what Kerry said about standing by his vote than what he said about the long-term commitment we have undertaken. Surely he would pledge to reduce our troops in Iraq by next summer, even if he wasn't prepared to simply call them home, as Democratic contender Howard Dean had demanded.

Well, here is how Senator Kerry put it: "I believe if you do the kind of alliance-building that is available to us, that it is appropriate to have a goal of reducing our troops over that period of time. Obviously we have to see how events unfold."

Indeed. What events?

Here is where John Kerry underwrote the Iraq venture in terms extraordinarily comprehensive. "The measurement has to be, as I've said all along, the stability of Iraq, the ability to have the elections, and the training and transformation of the Iraqi security force itself." Get from your paper supplier the thinnest sheet in the inventory, and you won't succeed in wedging it between the Republican and the Democratic position on the nature of our strategic objectives in Iraq.

This is reassuring, by most lights. The nation is at war; it is comforting that both political parties support the war. What is astonishing is that the entire vector of U.S. politics is here affected. The Democratic party, through its leaders, has expressed itself with progressive force against the Iraq war. It was certainly expected that Democratic challenger John Kerry would pound home his criticisms of President Bush's policies. Public support for the war has diminished in the 17 months since we went in. This reflects the absence of the weapons of mass destruction, the disaffection of some of our allies, the intransigence of the insurgents, and the mounting fatalities. The approval of the war has reduced from 73 percent early on to about 49 percent, and the dynamics of democratic government would suggest that the Democratic challenger would proceed, if not to deconstruct the war, at least to criticize the conduct of it and the assumptions associated with it.

Mr. Kerry is saying that our commitments continue until democratic elections in Iraq are held. This is a dream, though not, we like to think, extravagant. The *New York Times* has published an update on concrete questions, from which we learn that there is bad news (the insurgents have risen from 5,000 in April to 20,000 today), but that estimates of support for the new Iraqi government are at 68 percent, and 80 percent of Iraqis believe that life will improve under the new government.

It is an honorable thing for John Kerry to do, to associate himself so fully with the whole Iraq enterprise. Mr. Bush can take satisfaction from that endorsement, and critics of the war will have to exert themselves in other ways than merely to support the election of John Kerry.

What Did McGreevey Prove?

NEW YORK, AUGUST 13

In the matter of the resignation of Governor McGreevey, the impulse is to say: Let it alone—it is a private act. But that is the thoughtless, even cowardly way of disposing of the event, because it is tied in so many ways to public questions that need thought and exploration.

Perhaps preeminent of the questions being raised: Would he have had to resign if his affair had been with a woman rather than with another man? What looms in memory, of course, is Bill Clinton. But the augustness of his office had the effect of sheltering him. And the people who were central in the movement to depose him concentrated not on the sexual affair, but on the means taken to conceal it.

And of course the affair was heterosexual. Moreover, Ms. Lewinsky was at no time put in a high-level position in the administration. Several of the governor's critics emphasized the abuse of office in the naming of the lover to a high post in the homeland-security program. Add to this that the lover, as a foreign citizen, couldn't be processed by the normal security routine, which left New Jersey in the piquant situation of being the employer of a homeland-security agent who was not himself permitted to be briefed on security matters.

Perhaps most would agree that the crowning difficulty was that the lover suddenly demanded $5 million. That was either blackmail or extortion, and it put the governor in the unenviable position of having to do something to emasculate the lover. The classic means of doing this is to reveal yourself what the blackmailer holds over you, leaving him without any weapons at all, and as legitimate quarry of those in charge of enforcing the anti-blackmail laws. That responsibility is with the executive branch, headed up by the governor, raising the complication of a governor enforcing laws against a blackmailer whose target is the governor. So McGreevey was in a tight situation. But what is it that finally moved him to act?

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If he is to be believed, what moved him to resign was his infidelity. The words sounded like a thunderclap over Mt. Sinai. But that is what he said, that he was resigning because he had violated "my bonds of matrimony." "Violating bonds of matrimony" is found, in the yellow pages of tortdom, under Crimes of Yesteryear. The governor had been divorced, and the fact that the causes of this divorce were not mentioned in copious reports on his life serves to remind us how far we have traveled from the days when infidelity was grounds for divorce. In fact it was for a long period the only grounds for divorce, if the other spouse didn't want divorce. Winthrop Rockefeller, desiring to divorce a woman who wished to stay married, had to go all the way to Arkansas to find a state that would allow him to conclude the divorce. Even then, the terms were pretty rough: You had to become a bona fide resident of Arkansas, which took two years. Mr. Rockefeller decided to put that investment in Arkansas to good use, and so ran for governor of Arkansas.

McGreevey said about his first wife only that she went back to live, with their daughter, in British Columbia. Her removal left him free to marry again, which he did, siring another daughter.

But although the governor said nothing about abandoning conjugal life with his wife, he did say that in fact he was "a gay American." As such, he was forced to impose "an acceptable reality onto myself." But at this point he left his rapt listeners in confusion, saying that he had to concede that there were perhaps realities "from which" he was "running." He went on then to acclaim America as "the greatest nation, with . . . the greatest tradition of civil liberties in the world."

Where has he left us? What is it that has been, if not proved, at least hinted at? Barney Frank, the gay congressman, said that it's okay for a congressman to be gay, but not quite time for a governor to be gay, because his authority is too concentrated. Another observer said there was a single critical element in the governor's career, namely his having hired the lover, giving him $110,000 a year.

But his focus, not on abuse of office, not on the gender of his lover, not on the lover's extortionate demands, but on the marriage bond was electrifying. Perhaps his major legacy.

Can You Read?

NEW YORK, AUGUST 17

THE *New York Times* treats as the topmost news item of the day a report that students at (most) charter schools are doing worse than students at (most) public schools. These are data put together on fourth-grade students. The question asked was: How well are they reading?

We are told that the public school students are one half-year ahead of the charter-school students. This is certainly headline news, and what makes it a headline is that the findings are so unexpected. If the poll had established that students do better at charter schools, that news would have got nowhere on the front page. Why? Because it would merely confirm what the reader would assume, or intuit from the basic facts.

A charter school operates outside the authority of the school board. If dissatisfied parents join forces and hire a lawyer to walk them through the bureaucratic paces, they can organize a charter school. The hiring of teachers and arrangement of the curriculum would be left to the organizing council, and lo! a charter school has been founded. There are about 3,000 of these, 88,000 public schools, and the new federal program called No Child Left Behind anticipates a growth in the charter schools corresponding to the growth of the number of public schools that are shut down because they perform so poorly.

On the same day that this story broke, a Florida court narrowly (2-1) disallowed a voucher program that permits students to attend religious schools. To permit vouchers, said the court, flouts the provision of the Florida state constitution forbidding state money to religious schools.

There are huge mountains and valleys of thought that distinguish between supporting a religion and granting a voucher to a student who uses it to attend a school in which religion is also taught. These are qualifications acknowledged by the Supreme Court, and the ruling in Tallahassee may not last till the next hurricane. Gov. Jeb Bush has ordered an appeal, the school will proceed as before until that appeal is heard, and constitutional adjustments are always possible.

But the question dogs all Americans, which is: Many public schools are doing a bad job in educating children; what can be done about it? Do we need to surrender to a constitutional vise that seeks a theological commitment to the separation of church and state binding enough to choke off any flow of state funds to schools that mention Adam and Eve?

The big headline on the matter of the charter schools doing less well than the public schools is obviously based on findings which are either aberrational or tendentious. If a charter school is organized and the superintending citizens who put it together are motivated by a desire for improved education, why should such a school do less well than a public school? It is possible that the students in the charter schools whose reading scores were compiled were especially retrograde, bringing average accomplishment down for the short term. If a charter school devised to perform better than the public school from which the students were withdrawn fails to meet its goal, it should cease to exist.

Or it can go private. The unending phenomenon in Washington, D.C., inviting indignation and frustration, is the private schools to which all congressmen send their children but which are not permitted to educate the children of lesser creatures because they can't pay the fees, lacking vouchers. They lack vouchers because of the hard fist of teachers unions, and the underlying fear of offending racial minorities, never mind that these minorities plead for the succor of better education.

The charter schools will handle such setbacks as yesterday's poll—there is no reason for the charter school to fail. But yesterday's judicial finding is sustained by a hard and superstitious prejudice against any religion in schools. That will take longer to cope with.

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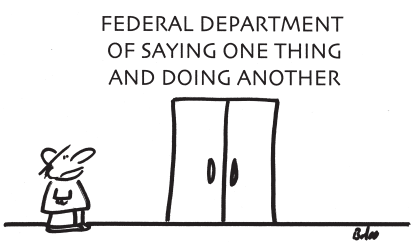

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MARK STEYN

The Future of Jihad

WHAT would happen if "al-Qaeda" (for want of an easier shorthand) produced a Yasser Arafat figure?

That's to say, imagine America's enemies with a figurehead who gets treated as Arafat does. Emissaries from the Vatican and the EU routinely make pilgrimages to the Palestinian leader's compound and get photographed beaming alongside him at that desk of his with the big unchanging pile of paperwork and the curiously omnipresent box of baby wipes. He's received at the U.N., EU, Arab League, and (depending on the occupant) even the White House as a head of state whose lack of a state to head is a mere technical detail. I see a country called "Palestine" got to march in the 2004 Olympics parade as if it were no different from New Zealand or Denmark.

If you persist, as many do, in arguing the comparative threats of rogue states and stateless actors, Arafat offers a unique perspective: a stateless actor for whom the world created a rogue statelet. For all that paperwork (requisition slips for suicide-bomber belts?) Arafat seems to have little interest in government. Unlike other politicians of one's acquaintance, he has as far as I'm aware no affordable-prescription-drugs plan for seniors, nor any views on outsourcing. Thirty years ago, he was head of a movement of killers—killers, indeed, of several prominent Americans. Today, he heads a more diffused movement of killers—the intifada—and all that's changed is the innovativeness of their depravity. One thinks, for example, of the suicide bomber with vials of HIV-positive blood in his belt, with which he hoped to infect fatally those who survived the initial blast. And yet no matter what he does his European cheerleaders refuse to fall out of love with a vain, unreformable terrorist whose incompetence and thuggery can apparently never dent the Palestinians' inviolable status as "victims" of Israeli "occupation."

What if that happened to the broader jihad? Already, there's a palpable longing to make the Islamists just a garden-variety terrorist movement, like the IRA or the Baader-Meinhof Gang. Mo Mowlam, formerly Britain's Northern Ireland secretary, oversaw the process by which the IRA's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness became Ministers of a Crown they decline to recognize. And she figures, if you can pull that off, what's the big deal with al-Qaeda? Earlier this year, she called for Osama bin Laden to be invited to "the negotiating table"—a difficult trick: What's left of him would fit in the salt shaker. But, putting such technicalities aside, Mowlam's main point was that the whole "War on Terror" approach was all wrong. "If you go in with guns and bombs, you act as a recruitment officer for the terrorists," she said.

Well, she's a Labour leftie, what do you expect? But Michael Ancram, deputy leader of the British Conservative party, isn't sounding so very different. He's proposed a Grand Congress of Reconciliation that would sit in Istanbul with representatives of the world's Muslim nations plus America, Britain, Russia, Europe, and Australia (what? no Canadians?) to thrash out areas of difference and produce a Declaration of Reconciliation detailing the appropriate compromises. For example, many mainstream imams want to stone adulteresses to death, behead all sodomites, and kill all the Jews. Maybe the Grand Congress of Reconciliation would thrash out a compromise whereby we lightly pebble-dash adulteresses, merely castrate sodomites, and kill only some of the Jews, just the troublemakers, maybe 10 percent.

Alas, the other side isn't interested. Hussein Massawi, the Hezbollah leader behind the Beirut barracks bombings 20 years ago, put it at its pithiest: "We are not fighting so that you will offer us something. We are fighting to eliminate you."

But suppose that changed. Suppose a kind of political wing evolved parallel to the suicide bombing, like Sinn Fein and the IRA, with some Saeb Erekat-type spokesperson who plays well on CNN. The Arab League would anoint them as the sole legitimate representatives, and the EU would almost certainly agree to meet with them, and even in America the likes of Sen. Patty Murray, who famously hymned Osama for "building day-care facilities, building health-care facilities," would probably be eager to tour their nurseries and seniors centers. A large chunk of the West is almost begging for some fellows on the other side to sit down and talk with, because sitting down and talking is what they do best, even with folks who want to blow them up.

Already, there's a palpable longing to make the Islamists just a garden-variety terrorist movement.

Given the growing Muslim populations in Europe and the remarkable success hitherto-obscure Muslim lobby groups have had in constraining certain aspects of the War on Terror, it seems almost certain that Islamist political parties will arise on the Continent within the next decade. And, given the very few degrees of separation between very prominent Western Muslims—ambassadors, princes, professors—and the terrorists, it seems likely that many prominent figures in these parties will be broadly supportive of the terrorists' ends if not necessarily their means. And, given the governing principle of multicultural society—that Western man demonstrates his cultural sensitivity by preemptively surrendering—it seems to me that any savvy Islamist, surveying the Madrid bombing and the aftermath, might be contemplating the benefits of a twin-track strategy.

In the years ahead, the urge by weak-willed allies to "politicize" the War on Terror will be one of the biggest challenges for Washington. NR

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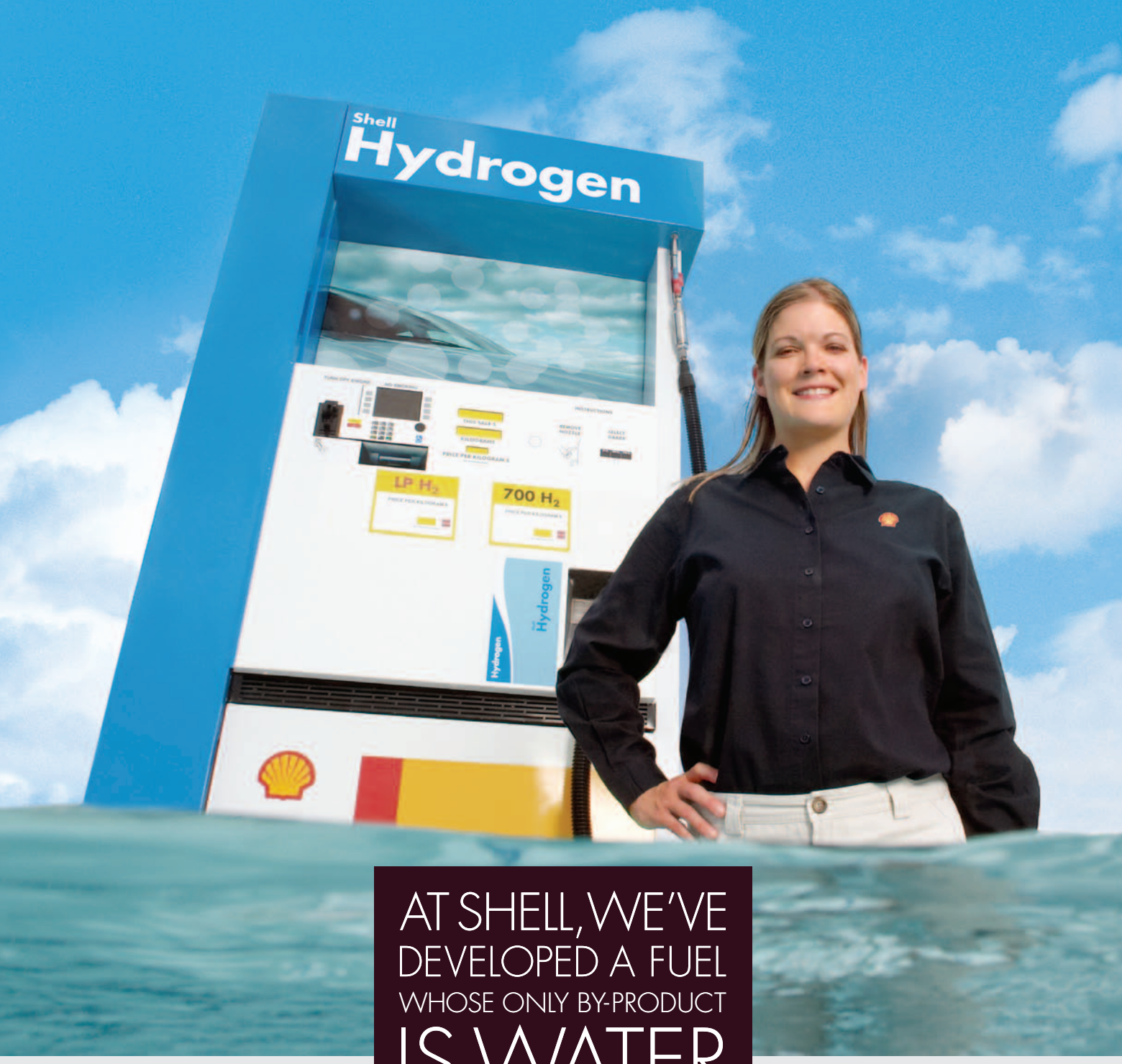

AT SHELL, WE'VE DEVELOPED A FUEL WHOSE ONLY BY-PRODUCT IS WATER. HOW REFRESHING.

The promise of hydrogen is exciting, but commercial viability is a long-term prospect. At Shell there's progress toward the promise, thanks to a commitment to make the hydrogen economy a reality.

Key to this progress are strategic relationships with leading companies like General Motors and people like Kristin Andrichik, Business Development Advisor with Shell Hydrogen (U.S.). Kristin works to capitalize on Shell leadership in fueling technologies and GM's expertise in vehicle technology to determine the best path toward the commercialization.

The centerpiece of this union is the nation's first hydrogen refueling dispenser at a retail site, which supports a fleet of GM hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

Ultimately, commercialization will depend on individuals choosing hydrogen. And through the efforts of Kristin and others like her, Shell is ready to meet those needs.

Visit www.shell.com/newenergies for details on this and other Shell activities.

"Shell Hydrogen" refers to a global business of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group and consists of separate companies set up to pursue and develop business opportunities related to hydrogen and fuel cells.

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